

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

Two Plays

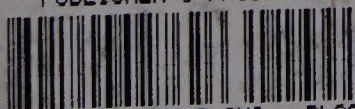
BLOOD WEDDING

In a new translation by Trader Faulkner

DOÑA ROSITA THE SPINSTER

In a new translation by Rebecca Morahan and Auriol Smith

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LORCA
TWO PLAYS

Federico García Lorca

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BLOOD WEDDING

DOÑA ROSITA THE SPINSTER



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BLOOD WEDDING

A play by Federico García Lorca (1933)

in a new translation
by Trader Faulkner

TRANSLATING LORCA

Lorca, a universal poet dramatist, is not only Spanish but, *au fond*, quintessentially Andalusian.

Having played the Moon for Peter Hall in his 1954 London production at the Arts Theatre, and subsequently having directed the play, I have taken the liberty of inserting one or two lines in Lorca's original Spanish. This is as a result of a conversation I was lucky enough to have with his brother Francisco García Lorca, through Lorca's biographer Ian Gibson. The use of these lines is, of course, optional for any director and simply to give the text Lorca's understated Granadine universality.

Translating and adapting Lorca for an English speaking audience, while retaining his exact thought and intent, is tantamount to doing the acrobatic back-flip, on a tight-rope over Niagara Falls. The back-flip, on a trampoline and a hard wooden floor which I have managed, just, is a doddle compared to doing justice to Federico in English.

Trader Faulkner
July 2009

Characters

THE MOTHER
THE BRIDE (LA NOVIA)
THE MOTHER-IN-LAW
LEONARDO'S WIFE
THE SERVANT (A WOMAN)
THE NEIGHBOUR (A WOMAN)
YOUNG GIRLS
LITTLE GIRL
YOUNG MEN
LEONARDO
THE BRIDEGROOM (EL NOVIO)
THE FATHER OF THE BRIDE
THE MOON
DEATH (AS A BEGGAR WOMAN)
1ST WOODCUTTER
2ND WOODCUTTER
3RD WOODCUTTER
NEIGHBOURS
FIESTA GUESTS

Note: The sections of text in bold are optional. A director may or may not want to use them.

Act One

SCENE 1

A room painted yellow.

BRIDE
BRIDEGROOM (*Entering.*) [Madre] Mother

MOTHER What?

BRIDEGROOM I'm off.

MOTHER Where?

BRIDEGROOM To the vineyard. (*He moves to go.*)

MOTHER Wait!

BRIDEGROOM What is it?

MOTHER Take some lunch son.

BRIDEGROOM Leave it. I'll cut some grapes. Give me the knife.

MOTHER What for?

BRIDEGROOM (*Laughing.*) To cut the grapes.

MOTHER (*Muttering angrily and looking for it.*)
Knives! Knives! Damn every knife, and the scum who invented them.

BRIDEGROOM Let's change the subject.

MOTHER And – shotguns, and pistols, and flick knives yes – and hoes and pitchforks.

BRIDEGROOM Alright!

MOTHER Whatever can rip a man's body.
A handsome man in his prime. Who works his vineyards – or cares for his olive groves – because they're his own – his inheritance.

BRIDEGROOM (*Lowering his head.*) Let's drop it.

MOTHER The man who never returns, or if his corpse comes back, we cover him with a palm leaf, or a bucket of rock salt to keep the body from swelling in the heat.

I don't know how you dare carry a knife
or how I allow such a serpent to lurk in
my kitchen drawer.

BRIDEGROOM

(*Morosely.*) Have you finished?

MOTHER

If I live another hundred years you
won't hear the end of it. First your father
who smelt of carnation, barely three
years of happiness I had with him. Then
your brother. Is it right? Why should
any thing as small as a pistol or a knife
be able to put paid to a bull of a man? I
can't let this rest – ever. The months go
by and despair needles my eyes and the
very roots of my hair.

BRIDEGROOM

(*Forcefully.*) Can we finish with this?

MOTHER

No we can not. Can anyone bring back
your father? Or your brother?

Then it's prison? And what's that
supposed to mean? They eat there!
Smoke there! Play their guitars! But my
dead are mute, choked with grass and
turned to dust. Two men like flowers in
bloom. Their killers behind bars – large
as life – free to gaze at the mountains.

BRIDEGROOM

So, you expect me to kill them?

MOTHER

No... But I have to speak out. How can
I be silent when I see you go through
that door? I just don't like you carrying
a knife. I'd rather you didn't have to go
out to the fields.

BRIDEGROOM

(*Laughing.*) Oh come on!

MOTHER

Better you were a woman, you wouldn't
be going to the stream now, and we
could both be here embroidering
flounces and little woollen dogs.

BRIDEGROOM (*Laughing he puts his arm around his MOTHER.*) Suppose I take you to the vineyard with me, mother?

MOTHER What use would an old woman like me be in the vineyard? Would you put me in the shade under the vine shoots?

BRIDEGROOM (*Lifting her up and swinging her round.*) Old... Very old... Oldest of the old.

MOTHER Mind you, your father took me out with him. That's good stock for you, good blood. Your grandfather left a son on every street corner. That's a man I admire. Men that are men. Wheat that is wheat.

BRIDEGROOM What about me, mother?

MOTHER What about you?

BRIDEGROOM Do I have to repeat myself?

MOTHER (*Seriously.*) Ah!

BRIDEGROOM You think it's such a bad idea?

MOTHER No.

BRIDEGROOM Well then ...?

MOTHER I just don't know. So sudden like this. Always takes me by surprise. I know the girl's good... (*Pause.*) Isn't she? Well behaved, hardworking, makes her own bread, sews her own clothes, yet whenever I say her name I feel as though I have been hit on the forehead with a rock.

BRIDEGROOM Nonsense.

MOTHER More than nonsense. It means I'll be alone. You're all I have left and I dread your going.

BRIDEGROOM But you'll be coming with us.

- MOTHER No. I can't leave your father and brother alone here. I must go every morning. And suppose I leave here and a Felix* dies – one of that brood of murderers, and they bury him next to mine. No way! No way! Because I'd rip him out with my nails and grind his body against the cemetery wall with my bare hands.
- BRIDEGROOM (*Exploding.*) Oh, not again!
- MOTHER I'm sorry. (*Pause.*) How long have you known each other?
- BRIDEGROOM Three years. And the vineyard belongs to me now.
- MOTHER Three years. Didn't she have a boyfriend sometime back?
- BRIDEGROOM Don't know. I don't think so. Girls have to watch who they marry.
- MOTHER Yes. I never looked at another man. I only had eyes for your father and when they murdered him I turned my face to the wall. One woman with her man and that's it.
- BRIDEGROOM You know she's a good girl.
- MOTHER I don't doubt that. All the same I'd like to have known what her mother was like.
- BRIDEGROOM What difference could that have made?
- MOTHER (*Looking at him.*) My boy.
- BRIDEGROOM Yes?
- MOTHER It's true! You're right! When would you like me to ask for her?
- BRIDEGROOM (*Happily.*) Would Sunday be alright?

* Pronounced *Fellix*

MOTHER (Seriously.) I'll take her those bronze earrings. They're very old; and you must buy her...

BRIDEGROOM You understand these things better...

MOTHER You must buy her some patterned stockings and two suits for yourself – no, three! You're the only one I've got now.

BRIDEGROOM I'm off. I'll go and see her tomorrow.

MOTHER Yes, do. And see if you can brighten my days with six grandchildren, or as many as you want, since your father had no time to give me any more.

BRIDEGROOM The first one for you.

MOTHER Yes, but make sure you have some girls, because I want to embroider, make lace and enjoy a little peace.

BRIDEGROOM I know you'll love my bride.

MOTHER I will. (She goes to kiss him, but thinks better of it.) Go on, you're too big for kisses now. Save them for your wife. (Pause. Aside.) When she is your wife.

BRIDEGROOM I must go.

MOTHER You need to really work that land round the little mill...you've been neglecting that.

BRIDEGROOM So! We're agreed.

MOTHER God be with you [Ánda Con Dios.]
The BRIDEGROOM goes. The MOTHER remains seated with her back to the door. The NEIGHBOUR appears at the door wearing dark colours and a scarf.
 (Beckons.) Come in. [Pása]

NEIGHBOUR How are you? [Cómo estás?]

MOTHER As you see.

LORCA

NEIGHBOUR I was down at the store, so I dropped by to see you. We live so far apart!

MOTHER I haven't been up to the top of the street in twenty years.

NEIGHBOUR You're looking well.

MOTHER You think so?

NEIGHBOUR Life goes on. Two days ago they brought back my neighbour's son...both arms sliced clean off by that machine.
(*She sits.*)

MOTHER Rafael?

NEIGHBOUR Yes. That's the way of it. I often think your son and mine are better off the way they are, asleep and at peace, instead of alive and crippled.

MOTHER Be quiet. Least said, soonest mended.

NEIGHBOUR Ay!

MOTHER Ay!
Pause.

NEIGHBOUR (*Sadly.*) Where's your son?

MOTHER He's gone out.

NEIGHBOUR So, at last he's bought the vineyard!

MOTHER He was lucky.

NEIGHBOUR Now he can get married.

MOTHER (*Her interest aroused, and moving her chair near her NEIGHBOUR.*) Tell me something.

NEIGHBOUR (*Confidentially.*) Tell you what?

MOTHER Do you know my son's girl?

NEIGHBOUR A good girl!

MOTHER Yes but...

NEIGHBOUR But...nobody really knows her. Nobody! She lives way out there, alone with her father, it must be fifteen kilometres to

the nearest house. But she is a good girl
– used to being on her own.

MOTHER What about her mother?

NEIGHBOUR Her mother I did know, beautiful
woman...face that shone like a saint's...
but I never took to her. She never loved
her husband.

MOTHER *(Aggressive.)* Some people know
everything.

NEIGHBOUR Sorry. I didn't mean to offend, but it's
true. Now, whether or not she behaved
herself. There was no gossip. No one
ever said. Proud, she certainly was.

MOTHER You're all the same!

NEIGHBOUR Well, you did ask.

MOTHER I wish nobody had ever heard about
either of them, the daughter alive or
the mother dead. I wish they were two
thistles that spiked the wagging tongues
that mentioned them.

NEIGHBOUR You're right. Your son's a fine boy.

MOTHER He is! That's why I take good care
of him. Apparently the girl had a
sweetheart some time back.

NEIGHBOUR She must have been about fifteen then.
In fact he ended up marrying her
cousin...must be two years ago now. No
one seems to remember the engagement.

MOTHER How do you remember?

NEIGHBOUR Is this an interrogation?

MOTHER It's human nature to want to know the
worst. Who was the sweetheart...the
novio?

NEIGHBOUR Leonardo.

MOTHER Leonardo who?

- NEIGHBOUR Leonardo Felix.
- MOTHER (*Starts up.*) Felix!
- NEIGHBOUR Come on. How's Leonardo in any way to blame? He was only eight when all that blew up.
- MOTHER I know... But I hear that name Felix, and Felix for me is like a mouth full of rotten sperm. (*She spits.*) And I have to spit... Spit! So I won't kill.
- NEIGHBOUR Control yourself. What good'll that do?
- MOTHER None... But you understand.
- NEIGHBOUR Don't stand in the way of your son's happiness. Say nothing. You're old. So am I. For the likes of us it's wiser to be silent.
- MOTHER I'll tell him nothing.
- NEIGHBOUR (*Kissing her.*) Nothing.
- MOTHER (*Calmly.*) The way things turn out!
- NEIGHBOUR I must go. My men will soon be back from the hills.
- MOTHER Have you ever known such heat?
- NEIGHBOUR The kids that take water up to the reapers are burnt black. Adiós Mujér.
- MOTHER Adiós! (*She crosses to the door left. Halfway there she stops and slowly crosses herself.*)

CURTAIN

or

LIGHTING CHANGE.

SCENE 2

A room painted pink, with copperware and bunches of wild flowers. Centre stage a table with a tablecloth. It is morning and LEONARDO's MOTHER-IN-LAW

has a child in her arms. She rocks him.
LEONARDO's WIFE sits in the other
corner darning.

MOTHER-IN-LAW Nana, niño nana
 slumber my little one
 dream of the mighty stallion
 who wouldn't drink the water.
 The water blackened water
 coiling through the branches.
 When the bridge she reaches
 he'll stop and sing his song there.
 Who'll tell you my niño,
 what's down there in the water
 through her green halls dreaming
 with her long hair streaming?

WIFE (*In a low voice.*) Dream, carnation,
 dream,
 for the horse will not drink at the
 stream.

MOTHER-IN-LAW Rose, lie there and sleep
 for now the horse is beginning to
 weep.
 His poor hooves are bleeding
 his long mane is frozen,
 thrust deep in his eyelids
 a dagger of silver.
 Far down in the river
 Ay! there at its deepest!
 His dark blood was flowing
 more forcefully than water.

WIFE Dream, carnation, dream,
 for the horse will not drink at the
 stream.

MOTHER Rose, lie there and sleep
 for now the horse is beginning to
 weep.

WIFE He shied to set foot

- on the damp river shore,
the warmth of his nostrils
drew flies flecked with silver.
At the granite mountains
he could only whinny,
with the moribund stream
across his throat flowering
Ay! great horse of shadow
that shies at the water!
Ay! sad snows of mourning
stallion of the dawning.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW Come not this way, nor enter here!
Shut tight every window
with dreams that are branches
and branches to dream of.
- WIFE My niño is dreaming.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW My niño is silent.
- WIFE The stallion, my niño
has now a fine pillow.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW His little cot of metal.
- WIFE His quilt of fine Dutch linen.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW Nana, niño, nana.
- WIFE [Ay! **caballo grande**
que no quisó el agua]
Ay! great horse in shadow
who will not drink the water!
- MOTHER-IN-LAW Come not this way, nor enter here!
But ride you to the mountain lair,
through the grey valleys misty
to the place where roams the mare.
- WIFE (*Looking at her child.*) My niño is
dreaming.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW My niño is resting.
- WIFE (*In a very soft voice.*) Dream, carnation,
dream,

for the horse will not drink at the stream.

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*Getting up very gently.*) Rose, lie there and sleep,
for now the horse is starting to weep.

The MOTHER-IN-LAW exits with the child. LEONARDO enters.

LEONARDO Where's the niño?

WIFE He's sound asleep.

LEONARDO Something upset him yesterday. He was crying all night.

WIFE (*Happily.*) Well today he's as fresh as a dahlia. And you? Are things sorted out at the blacksmith's.

LEONARDO I've just come from there. Would you believe it? For the past two months I've done nothing but reshoe that horse, and they keep coming off. I reckon he rips 'em off on the stones.

WIFE Couldn't you be riding him into the ground?

LEONARDO No! I seldom ride him.

WIFE Well you were seen yesterday, riding way out on the other side of the plains.

LEONARDO Who told you?

WIFE The women gathering capers. It certainly surprised me. Was it you?

LEONARDO No. What would I be doing out in that scorching wilderness?

WIFE That's what I said. But the horse came back pouring with sweat.

LEONARDO Did you see it?

WIFE No, my mother.

LEONARDO Is she with the niño?

- WIFE Yes. Want a drink of lemon?
- LEONARDO (*Nods.*) And make it ice cold.
- WIFE You didn't come back for dinner...
- LEONARDO I was seeing the wheat weighed. The millers always hold things up.
- WIFE (*Preparing his lemon drink, cautiously.*) Are they paying a good price?
- LEONARDO Not bad.
- WIFE I could do with a new dress. and the baby needs a bonnet that ties.
- LEONARDO (*Getting up.*) I'm going to take a look at him.
- WIFE Go quietly he's asleep.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW (*Entering.*) So who's been racing that horse? He's stretched out down there with his eyes bulging as though he's been galloped from the ends of the earth.
- LEONARDO (*Sharply.*) Me.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW Pardon me for speaking. He's your horse.
- WIFE (*Timidly.*) He's been down seeing the wheat weighed.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW He can bust a gut for all I care. (*She sits.*)
Pause.
- WIFE Is your drink cold enough?
- LEONARDO Yes.
- WIFE You know they're announcing my cousin's engagement.
- LEONARDO When?
- WIFE Tomorrow. They'll be married within the month. I expect we'll be invited.
- LEONARDO (*Morose.*) I wouldn't know.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW I doubt the boy's mother's too happy about it.

LEONARDO His mother could well be right. That girl needs a tight rein.

WIFE Why must you think that way about a decent girl.

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*With malice.*) He only says what he knows. Don't forget he courted her for three years.

LEONARDO But I left her. (*To his WIFE.*) You going to cry now? Stop it! (*He wrenches her hands from her face.*) Come on! Come, and see our little niño.

They exit, arm in arm. A GIRL comes running in. She looks happy.

GIRL Señora.

MOTHER-IN-LAW What's up?

GIRL The young novio came into the store and bought the best of everything there was.

MOTHER-IN-LAW Did he come on his own?

GIRL No. With his mother. Tall she was, stern looking. (*She imitates her.*) Talk about extravagant.

MOTHER-IN-LAW Money's no object.

GIRL They bought some embroidered stockings! You should have seen them! Stockings women dream about. Look! (*She points to her ankle.*) A swallow here. (*To her calf.*) A boat here. And here (*Indicating her thigh.*) a little red rose bush!

MOTHER-IN-LAW Child!

GIRL A rose with its seeds and its stalk! Oh! and everything in pure silk. Everything!

MOTHER-IN-LAW Wealth marrying wealth.

LEONARDO and his WIFE enter.

GIRL I just came to tell you what your cousin's novio's been buying at the store.

LEONARDO (*Harshly.*) What's that to us?

WIFE Let her be.

MOTHER-IN-LAW Leonardo, that wasn't necessary.

GIRL I'm sorry. (*She goes off crying.*)

MOTHER-IN-LAW Do you have to be so disagreeable?

LEONARDO I didn't ask for your opinion. (*He sits.*)

MOTHER-IN-LAW That's fine by me.

Pause.

WIFE (*To LEONARDO.*) What's the matter with you anyway? What's boiling away inside your head? Don't just leave me like this, knowing nothing.

LEONARDO Forget it.

WIFE No, just look me straight in the eye and tell me.

LEONARDO Leave me alone. (*He gets up.*)

WIFE Where are you going? Hombre!

LEONARDO (*Sourly.*) Can't you shut up?

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*To her daughter sharply.*) Say nothing.

LEONARDO exits.

SSSSHHH! The niño!

She exits and returns with the baby in her arms. LEONARDO's WIFE hasn't moved. She stands absolutely still.

His poor hooves are wounded,
his long mane is frozen,
thrust deep in his eyelids
a dagger of silver.
Far down in the river
his dark blood was flowing
more forcefully than water.

WIFE: *(Swaying slowly as though in a trance.)*
Dream, carnation, dream
for the horse now drinks
from the stream.

MOTHER-IN-LAW Rose, lie there and sleep,
for the horse is beginning to weep.

WIFE Nana, niño, nana

MOTHER-IN-LAW Ay! stallion of shadow
that would not drink the water.

WIFE *(With controlled intensity.)*
Come not this way
nor enter here! But ride you to the
mountain lair
Ay! sad snow of mourning,
stallion of the dawning.

MOTHER-IN-LAW *(Weeping.)* My niño is sleeping.

WIFE *(Weeping and bending over the baby.)* My
niño is resting.

MOTHER-IN-LAW Dream, carnation, dream,
for the horse will not drink at the
stream.

WIFE *(Weeping and leaning on the table.)* Rose,
lie there and sleep,
for now the horse is beginning to
weep.

CURTAIN

or

LIGHTING CHANGE.

SCENE III

*Interior of the cave where the BRIDE lives.
At the back hangs a cross of large pink
flowers.*

*The rounded doors are framed with lace
curtains and pink ribbons. On walls*

made of hard white material are round fans, blue jars, small mirrors.

SERVANT

(Beckons.) Pása, pásá, pásá. (She is very affable, full of deferential hypocrisy.)

The BRIDEGROOM and his MOTHER enter. The MOTHER is dressed in black satin and wears a lace mantilla. The NOVIO/BRIDEGROOM wears a black corduroy suit and a heavy gold chain.

If you'd like to sit down they'll be here in a minute. (She leaves. MOTHER and SON remain seated, stiff as statues.)

Long pause.

MOTHER

Did you bring your watch?

BRIDEGROOM

Yes. *(He takes it out and looks at it.)*

MOTHER

We musn't be too late leaving. These people live in the back of beyond.

BRIDEGROOM

But this is good land.

MOTHER

Good maybe, but far too isolated. Four hours to get here, and not a house or tree in sight.

BRIDEGROOM

It's dry country.

MOTHER

Your father would have had it covered with trees.

BRIDEGROOM

Without water?

MOTHER

He'd have done it. In our three years together he planted ten cherry trees, *(Remembering.)* those three walnut trees by the mill, a whole vineyard and a plant called Jupiter...that had blood red flowers, but it dried up.

Pause.

BRIDEGROOM

(His mind on the BRIDE.) She must be getting dressed.

The BRIDE's FATHER enters. An old man with shining white hair. He has a slight stoop. The MOTHER and the GROOM rise and they shake hands in silence.

FATHER Take you long to get here?

MOTHER Four hours.

They sit.

FATHER You must have come the longest way.

MOTHER I'm too old to scramble over those cliff tops by the river.

BRIDEGROOM It makes her dizzy.

She gives him a look.

Pause.

FATHER Good crop of esparto grass.

BRIDEGROOM Really good.

FATHER In my day this land wouldn't even yield esparto. I've had to punish it and weep over it, to get anything of value back.

MOTHER Well now it's yielding; so don't complain. I haven't come here to beg.

FATHER (*Smiling.*) You're far better off than me. Your vineyards must be worth a fortune. Every vine shoots a silver coin. I'm just sorry our lands...if you catch my drift – are so far apart. I like everything in one piece. The real thorn in my flesh is that little orchard that splits my land, they wouldn't sell that to me for all the gold in existence.

BRIDEGROOM There's always a snag.

FATHER If we could use twenty teams of oxen to pull your vineyards over here and put them on the hillside I'd be very happy.

MOTHER Why?

LORCA

- FATHER Mine's hers. Yours is his. That's why. To see all our land in one piece – that'd be beautiful.
- BRIDEGROOM And less work.
- MOTHER When I'm dead, sell ours, and buy out here.
- FATHER Sell! Sell! Bah! Buy woman! Buy everything you can. If I had sons I'd have bought this whole hillside right down to the stream. It's not great land, but strong arms can make it good enough, and as no one comes this way they don't steal your fruit, and you can sleep easy.
- Pause.*
- MOTHER You know why I'm here.
- FATHER Yes.
- MOTHER Well?
- FATHER Seems like a good idea. And they've talked it over.
- MOTHER My son's well endowed and he knows how to use it.
- FATHER So does my daughter.
- MOTHER My son's handsome, never known a woman, he's as clean as a sheet laid out in the sun.
- FATHER I can say the same for my girl. At three when the morning star's out, she's baking the bread, never gossips, gentle as fleece, can embroider anything and cut a piece of twine with her teeth.
- MOTHER God bless this house.
- FATHER God bless us.

The SERVANT appears with two trays, one with glasses, the other with little cakes.

MOTHER (To her SON.) When do you want the wedding?

BRIDEGROOM Next Thursday.

FATHER That's her twenty-second birthday.

MOTHER Twenty-two. That's what my eldest son would have been...had he lived. He'd have been here with us now, the real man he was – so alive! – if men hadn't invented knives.

FATHER You can't dwell on that.

MOTHER God knows there's not a second that passes...

FATHER Thursday then. Agreed?

BRIDEGROOM Agreed.

FATHER It's a long way from here to the church. So the bride, groom and you and I – we'll go by carriage. The guests can get there in their carts, and on the horses they bring with them.

MOTHER That's settled then.

SERVANT enters.

FATHER Tell her she can come in now. (To the MOTHER.) I'll be a very happy man if you like her.

The BRIDE enters, her head bowed, her hands modestly at her side.

MOTHER Come over here...Pasa...! Are you happy?

BRIDE Si señora.

FATHER You musn't look so solemn. After all, she's going to be your mother.

LORCA

- BRIDE I'm content. When I said 'yes' it's because...that's what I mean.
- MOTHER Naturally. (*Putting her hand under the girl's chin.*) Look at me.
- FATHER You could be looking at my wife – as she was then.
- MOTHER Really? She's lovely to look at. You know what it is to marry, child?
- BRIDE (*Solemnly.*) I do.
- MOTHER A man, children. And for the rest a wall that's two metres thick.
- BRIDEGROOM Isn't that enough?
- MOTHER No. Life! Your children's right to life! Just that.
- BRIDE I know how to keep my word.
- MOTHER Here! Some gifts for you.
- BRIDE Thank you.
- FATHER Won't you try something?
- MOTHER Not for me. (*To her SON.*) What about you?
- BRIDEGROOM I will. (*Takes a cake. The BRIDE takes another one.*)
- FATHER (*To the GROOM.*) Wine?
- MOTHER Never touches it!
- FATHER Good for him.
- Pause.*
- They have all risen.*
- BRIDEGROOM (*To the BRIDE.*) I'll come tomorrow.
- BRIDE At what time?
- BRIDEGROOM At five.
- BRIDE I'll expect you.
- BRIDEGROOM I feel a terrible emptiness when I leave you, and a kind of knot in my throat.

BRIDE Once you are my husband you won't have it anymore.

BRIDEGROOM That's what I keep telling myself.

MOTHER So let's go then. The sun never tarries.
(*To the FATHER.*) Are we agreed on everything?

FATHER We are.

MOTHER (*To the SERVANT.*) Adiós Mujer.

SERVANT God be with you both. [**Vayan ustedes con Dios.**]
The MOTHER kisses the BRIDE and they begin to leave quietly.

MOTHER (*At the door.*) Adiós hija.
The BRIDE waves her hand without speaking.

FATHER I'll see you on your way.
They leave.

SERVANT I'm busting to see the presents.

BRIDE (*Sharply.*) Leave them.

SERVANT Ah! Child! Just a peep!

BRIDE I don't want to.

SERVANT Just the stockings then. I've heard they're all open work. Come on!

BRIDE I said no!

SERVANT Dear God! Alright. You don't seem very happy about getting married.

BRIDE (*Biting her hand in anger.*) Ayyyeee!

SERVANT Child alive! Whatever's the matter? Are we regretting we'll no longer be reigning as queen? Why so bitter? You've no reason. None! Come on, let's have a look at the presents. (*Picking up the box.*)

BRIDE (*Seizing her by the wrists.*) Let go!

SERVANT You're stronger than a man.

- BRIDE Haven't I done a man's work? I wish to
 God I were!
- SERVANT Don't talk like that.
- BRIDE Oh, for God's sake, leave off. Let's talk
 about something else.
 The light gradually fades.
 Long pause.
- SERVANT Did you hear a horse in the night?
- BRIDE What time?
- SERVANT Three o'clock.
- BRIDE A stray probably.
- SERVANT No. It had a rider.
- BRIDE How do you know?
- SERVANT Because I saw him. He stopped by your
 window. That's what struck me.
- BRIDE Could have been my novio. He
 sometimes comes by in the early hours.
- SERVANT No.
- BRIDE Then you saw him.
- SERVANT Yes.
- BRIDE Who was it?
- SERVANT Leonardo.
- BRIDE (*Harshly.*) Liar, liar! Why should he come
 here?
- SERVANT So! It was him.
- BRIDE Shut up! God damn your bloody tongue!
 The sound of hooves is heard.
- SERVANT (*At the window.*) Look! Come quickly!
 Was it him?
- BRIDE It was!
- QUICK CURTAIN.*
 or
 LIGHTING CHANGE.

Act Two

SCENE I

Entrance to the bride's house. A large door or arch at the back. Night. The BRIDE enters dressed in a white pleated ruffled petticoats beautifully embroidered and trimmed with lace. She wears a white bodice, her arms are bare. The SERVANT is similarly dressed.

SERVANT I'll finish combing your hair out here.

BRIDE It's unbearable in there in this heat.

SERVANT It doesn't even cool off at dawn in these parts.

The BRIDE sits in a low chair and looks at herself in a hand mirror. The SERVANT combs her hair.

BRIDE Where my mother came from there were trees everywhere. Good rich land.

SERVANT That's why she was happy.

BRIDE She just wasted away here...

SERVANT Fate.

BRIDE As we all are. The walls are on fire in this place. Ayyyyyeee! Don't pull so hard.

SERVANT I'm trying to arrange this wave better, I want it falling across your forehead.

The BRIDE looks at herself in the mirror.

Now you really do look beautiful. There!
(She kisses her impulsively.)

BRIDE *(Solemnly.)* Just keep on combing.

SERVANT *(Combing.)* Lucky you!...able to put your arms around a man...kiss him...and feel his weight.

- BRIDE Don't.
- SERVANT Best of all is when you wake up and feel him beside you and his breath caressing your shoulder like a nightingale's feather.
- BRIDE (*Forcefully.*) Will you please shut up!
- SERVANT But child! What is a wedding?
A wedding's that. And nothing else. It's not the cakes and sweets and bouquets of flowers – No! It's a shining bed; and a man and a woman.
- BRIDE These things shouldn't be said.
- SERVANT That's a matter of opinion. But what happiness!
- BRIDE Or what bitterness.
- SERVANT I'm going to arrange the orange blossom, the azahár*, from here to here, so that it shines on your hair like a crown. (*She tries on a sprig of orange blossom.*)
- BRIDE (*Looking at herself in the mirror.*) Give it to me.

She takes the sprig, looks at it and lowers her head dejectedly.
- SERVANT What's the matter?
- BRIDE Leave me alone.
- SERVANT There's no time to be sad. (*Spiritedly.*) Give me the azahár.

The BRIDE flings it away.

Child! Don't tempt fate by throwing your crown on the floor like that. Look at me. Don't you want to get married? Tell me. You can still change your mind.

* Pronounced *athár*.

- BRIDE (Getting up.) Clouds of misgiving. An icy chill of doubt, deep inside, doesn't everyone feel it?
- SERVANT Do you love him?
- BRIDE I love him.
- SERVANT Yes, yes, of course you do.
- BRIDE But it's such a big step.
- SERVANT It's got to be taken.
- BRIDE I'm already committed.
- SERVANT Let me put your crown on.
- BRIDE (She sits.) Hurry, they'll be here any minute.
- SERVANT They must have been on the road for at least two hours.
- BRIDE How far is it to the church from here?
- SERVANT Two hours if you go by the river, twice that by road.
- The BRIDE gets up and the SERVANT admires her excitedly.*
- Awake, little bride, awaken,
on the morn of your wedding day.
For all the world's great rivers
will carry your crown away.
- BRIDE (Smiling.) Let's go...vámos.
- SERVANT (Kisses her with feeling and dances around her.) So awaken
with your green sprig
of flowering laurel.
So awaken
by the trunk
and branch of laurel!
- A loud knocking is heard.*
- BRIDE Open the door! It'll be the first of the guests. (She exits.)

The SERVANT opens the door.

SERVANT (Startled.) You?
LEONARDO Me. [Buenos Dias.]
SERVANT You're the first!
LEONARDO Wasn't I invited?
SERVANT Yes.
LEONARDO Well. Here I am.
SERVANT Where's your wife?
LEONARDO I came on horseback. She's coming by road.
SERVANT Didn't you meet anyone?
LEONARDO I passed several on the way.
SERVANT You'll kill that animal they way you ride him.
LEONARDO When he dies, then dead he is.
Pause.
SERVANT Sit yourself down. No one's up yet.
LEONARDO What about the bride?
SERVANT I'm going to dress her this very minute.
LEONARDO She'll be happy...the bride...very happy.
SERVANT (Changing the subject.) How's your son?
LEONARDO Who?
SERVANT The baby...the niño.
LEONARDO (Withdrawn.) Ah!
SERVANT Are they bringing him?
LEONARDO No.

Pause.

Voices singing way in the distance.

VOICES
Despierte la novia. Despierte la
mañana de la boda!
Awake little bride, awaken,
on the morn of your wedding day!

LEONARDO Her wedding day is dawning
let the bride wake to the morning.

SERVANT It's the guests. Still a long way off.

LEONARDO (*Getting up.*) I suppose the bride'll be
wearing a big crown of azahár. Shouldn't
be too big. Something small would suit
her better. Did her novio also bring the
orange blossom that she has to wear
over her heart?

*BRIDE appears, still in her petticoats
but with the crown of orange blossom in
position.*

BRIDE He did.

SERVANT (*Scandalised.*) Don't come out like that.

BRIDE What does it matter? Why do you want
to know if he brought the azahár? What
are you insinuating?

LEONARDO Nothing. Why should I? (*Moving towards
her.*) You know me. You know I speak
my mind. Tell me. What have I ever
meant to you? Speak plain! Refresh
your memory! A couple of oxen and a
tumble-down shack just weren't your
style were they? That's where you put
the knife in.

BRIDE Why have you come here?

LEONARDO To watch your wedding.

BRIDE Just as I watched yours.

LEONARDO You tied that noose with your own two
hands. They may kill me but for all their
wealth they can't spit on me.

BRIDE Liar!

LEONARDO Better I shut up because I still have my
self respect, and why howl at the moon?

BRIDE I could howl louder!

LORCA

- SERVANT You can't go on like this. Bury the past.
 (As she glances uneasily at the door.)
- BRIDE She's right. I shouldn't even be speaking
 to you. But it makes my blood boil to see
 you come here to spy on my wedding
 and make insinuations about the orange
 blossom. Get out. Go and wait for your
 wife outside.
- LEONARDO Can't you and I even speak to each
 other?
- SERVANT *(Furious.)* No we can't.
- LEONARDO I've thought night and day since my
 wedding about whose fault it was. And
 I torment myself by finding somebody
 new to blame. All I know is someone's
 to blame.
- BRIDE A man with a horse knows his way
 around, and can easily impress a young
 girl stuck out in the middle of nowhere.
 But I have my pride, that's why I'm
 going to be married. And I'll lock myself
 in with my husband and I shall have to
 love him more than anyone on earth.
- LEONARDO Pride'll get you nowhere. *(He approaches
 her.)*
- BRIDE Don't come near me!
- LEONARDO The greatest punishment we can inflict
 on ourselves is to burn with longing
 and say nothing. What good was pride
 to me, not seeing you, and leaving you
 to lie awake night after night? No good
 whatsoever. All it did was set me alight.
 You think time heals and walls conceal.
 But it's not true! It's just not true! When
 roots pierce your centre no one can tear
 them out!

- BRIDE (*Trembling.*) I daren't hear you. I daren't hear your voice. It's as if I were drunk on anís and fallen asleep on a quilt of roses. And I'm dragged down, and I know I'm drowning but I'm pulled under.
- SERVANT (*Seizing LEONARDO by the lapels.*) You'd better go now!
- LEONARDO Don't worry. It's the last time I'll speak to her.
- BRIDE Yes, I know. I'm going mad, and I know my heart has turned rotten from holding back. Yet I get peace just by hearing him, seeing him move his arms.
- LEONARDO There'll be no peace for me if I don't speak out. I got married. Now you must.
- SERVANT (*To LEONARDO.*) She will.
- VOICES (*Singing nearer.*) Despiérte la novia.
Despiérte la mañana de la boda.
- BRIDE Awake little bride awaken on the morn of your wedding day. (*She runs off to her room.*)
- SERVANT The guests are arriving. (*To LEONARDO.*) Don't you ever come near her again.
- LEONARDO Don't worry. (*He exits stage left.*)
*Dawn is breaking.**
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL (*Entering.*) Awaken bride awaken on the morn of your wedding day; look at the dancers turning!

* The entirety of the following scene can be played with, in the background, the rhythm of Sevillanas 3/4 time, the actors trained to do the rhythmic clapping *palmas*. This, softly syncopated, will give the scene vitality and be absolutely in character. Much of Lorca's writing is subliminally in the rhythms of dance. It is customary in parts of Andalusia, especially Sevilla, to maintain the beat on a drum, as in the *Feria* and the *Rocío*.

- Each balcony crowns are adorning!
- VOICES Despiérte la novia!
- SERVANT (*Getting things going.*) Yes, awaken
with your green sprig of love that is
flowering.
Yes, awaken
with a branch
and a green sprig of laurel!
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL (*Entering.*) Bride awaken
with your long hair flowing,
blouse white as a snowflake,
patent leather boots flecked with silver
and your brow crowned with jasmines!
- SERVANT Ay pastora,
look, the moon at you is beginning to
shine.
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL Ay, señor,
leave your sombrero, down by the
olive grove!
- 1ST YOUTH: (*Enters holding his hat aloft.*) Awake
bride awaken,
through the fields they are coming
to serenade your wedding,
with trays brim full of dahlias
and loaves that are heavenly.
- VOICES Despiérte la novia!
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL La novia
with a crown
of white is adorned,
el novio
with ribbons of gold will secure it.
- SERVANT By the lemon balm
el novio's unable to sleep.
- 3RD YOUNG GIRL (*Entering.*) By the orange grove
el novio
will offer her the wedding gifts

he should.

Three guests – young men – enter.

1ST YOUTH:

Dove, awaken!
The dawn now has scattered
night echoes of shadow.

GUEST

La novia, the purest novia,
today a virgin
tomorrow a wife.

1ST YOUNG GIRL

Come down, dark beauty,
behind you, your silken
trains trailing.

GUEST

Come down, little dark one,
to morning dew that is icy.

1ST YOUTH:

Awaken señora! Awaken!
For now comes the wind
bearing blossoms of azahár.

SERVANT

A tree for her I'll embroider
bordered with ribbons of garnet,
on each ribbon find love's token
with long life all around.

VOICES

Bride awaken! [**Despiérte la novia!**]

1ST YOUTH:

This morning you're to marry!
[**La mañana de la boda!**]

2ND YOUNG GIRL

On the morning of your wedding
how beautiful you'll be looking;
you seem a flower of the mountains
the wife of a proud Capitán.

FATHER

(Entering.) The wife of a proud Capitán
with two oxen, he'll claim her, her
novio,
his treasure he's now come to seek!

3RD YOUNG GIRL

El novio
He seems like a flower that's golden.
When he walks past you,
at his footsteps will cluster
small pink carnations.

- SERVANT Ah! My child you're so lucky!
- 2ND YOUTH: Little bride now awaken.
- SERVANT Ay! But you're lovely.
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL The wedding now calls them
from every window.
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL Now bring out la novia!
- VOICES Bring her out! Bring her out!
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL Si, Que salga! Que salga!
- SERVANT Let bells ring out and peal
their ovation.
- 1ST YOUTH: Let us see you, young bride!... Here
she is!
- SERVANT Like a wild toro the wedding is tossing
its head.
- The BRIDE appears. She's dressed in
black 1900s style, with a bustle, and a
long train of pleated gauze and stiff lace.
She wears a crown of orange blossom. The
sound of guitars. The girls kiss the BRIDE.*
- 3RD YOUNG GIRL What perfume did you put on your hair?
- BRIDE (Laugh.) None.
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL (Looking at her dress.) You can't get
material like this anymore.
- 1ST YOUTH: Here's the novio.
- BRIDEGROOM Bienvenida. Welcome.
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL (Putting a flower behind her ear.) The novio
seems like a flower that is golden.
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL Through his eyes clearly shines the light
of tranquillity.
- The GROOM goes to his BRIDE.*
- BRIDE Why on earth have you got those
shoes on?
- BRIDEGROOM They're more fiesta than the black ones.

LEONARDO'S WIFE (*Entering and kissing the BRIDE.*) Good luck!

Everyone chatters excitedly.

LEONARDO (*Entering like someone doing his duty.*) On the morning of your marriage upon your head we place love's crown

WIFE So the fields may breathe the fragrance of the dew that crowns your hair!

MOTHER (*To the FATHER.*) So they're here too?

FATHER They're family. Today's a day for forgiveness!

MOTHER I'll put up with it. But I won't forgive.

BRIDEGROOM With that crown, it's a joy to look at you!

BRIDE Come on, let's get to the church!

BRIDEGROOM Are you in such a hurry?

BRIDE Yes. I want to be your wife and be alone with you and hearing no other voice but yours.

BRIDEGROOM That's what I want.

BRIDE And to look into no other eyes but your eyes. And I want you to hold me so tight that even if my mother called me from the dead, I couldn't be free of you.

BRIDEGROOM There's strength in these arms. I'll hold you tight and for forty years if need be.

BRIDE (*Clutching his arm desperately.*) Always!

FATHER Come along now! Fetch the carts and horses. The sun's already up.

MOTHER Ride carefully and let's hope nothing goes wrong.

They begin to leave.

SERVANT (*Crying.*) As you leave from your dwelling little white virgin

- remember that you leave it
as a radiant star!
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL Body and linen spotless
you depart from your dwelling
to celebrate your wedding.
- They continue leaving.*
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL As you leave your dwelling
to receive the church blessing!
- SERVANT Across the sand dunes
the wind's flowers are scattering.
- 3RD YOUNG GIRL [Ay! La blanca niña!] Ay the white
maiden.
- SERVANT Dark wind now lifting
the lace of your mantilla.
- They leave. Guitars, castanets and
tambourines are heard. LEONARDO and
his WIFE are left alone.*
- WIFE We must go.
- LEONARDO Where to?
- WIFE To the church. But not on horseback.
You're coming with me.
- LEONARDO In the cart?
- WIFE How else?
- LEONARDO I'm not a man to ride in carts.
- WIFE And I am not a woman to go to
weddings without her husband. I've just
about had as much as I can take.
- LEONARDO So have I.
- WIFE Why are you looking at me like that,
with a thorn in each eye?
- LEONARDO Let's go.
- WIFE I don't know what's going on. But I have
my suspicions and I don't want to think.
One thing I do know. I no longer matter

to you. But I have a son to consider, and another one coming, and so it goes. It happened to my mother... But I'm not budging from here.

VOICES (*Off.*) Setting out from your dwelling
to receive the church blessing
remember you leave it
as a radiant star!

WIFE (*Weeping.*) Remember you leave it
as a radiant star!
That's how I left my house.
I felt the whole world was mine.

LEONARDO (*Getting up.*) Come on.

WIFE Only with you!

LEONARDO Yes.

Pause.

Come on then!

They exit.

VOICES (*Off.*) Setting out from your dwelling
to receive the Church blessing
remember that you leave it
as a radiant star!

**[A salir de tu casa
para la Iglesia
acuérdate que sales
como una estrella!]**

Light fades to blackout.

SCENE II

Exterior of the BRIDE's cave. White, grey and cold blue colour tones. Large prickly pear trees. Silver and shadowy tones. Panorama of biscuit-coloured tablelands in the distance. Everything harsh like a landscape in popular ceramics.

SERVANT

Free spinning,
now the wheel was free spinning
and the water was flowing
for the wedding's approaching.
So the branches are parting
and the moon sheds her soft beams
upon her white verandah.

In the spirit of fiesta.

Spread out the table cloths!

With pathos.

Both singing,
bride and groom were both singing
and the water was flowing,
for the wedding night draws near.
So let passion burn rime-frost
to replace with sweet honey
the sour flavour of almonds.

With gusto.

Set out the wine!

Poetically.

So stylish,
in this land none more stylish,
look how the water's flowing.
As your wedding night draws near
wrap tight your skirts around you
nestle snug by your husband
never venture far from home.
For your husband is a dove
whose love's a raging furnace
and the field at night awaits
the whisper of trickling blood.
Free spinning,
now the wheel was free spinning
and the water was flowing
for your wedding's approaching,
let the water now sparkle!

MOTHER (Entering.) At last!

FATHER Are we the first?

SERVANT No. Leonardo arrived with his wife a while ago. They drove like demons. His wife was dead with fright when they got here. He drove that cart like he gallops his horse.

FATHER That one's riding for a fall...bad blood.

MOTHER How could he have good blood? They're scum the lot of them. The killing began with his great grandfather and it comes down through that whole evil brood of knife wielders and false smiling hypocrites.

FATHER Let's leave it.

SERVANT How can she leave it?

MOTHER It cuts me to the quick. I see nothing but the hand that murdered my men branded on the forehead of every single one of them. Look at me! Do I seem crazy to you? Well I am crazy from not having cried out the terrible agony in my heart. Deep inside me there's a scream that stands on tiptoe, and every time I have to force it back and smother it in these shawls. But they carry off my dead and I must stay silent. And still people criticise. (*She takes off her shawl.*)

FATHER You shouldn't let your mind dwell on these things, today of all days.

MOTHER If anything's said, I'll certainly have my say – more so than ever today, because today I'll be left alone in my house.

FATHER But you hope not for long.

MOTHER That's what I dream about – grandchildren.

They both sit down.

FATHER

The more the better. These lands need strong arms that aren't hired. You wage a never ending battle against weeds, thistles and stones that appear from God knows where. Owners' hands are needed to punish and master, so the land will yield crops. Many sons are needed.

MOTHER

And let's have a daughter. Men blow like the wind and by force of circumstance have to carry knives. Girls stay off the streets.

FATHER

(*Happily.*) I'm sure they'll have plenty of both.

MOTHER

My son will cover her well. He's of good stock. His father could have sired many children from me.

FATHER

I just wish that it could all happen in a single day. Then we could count on two or three grown men straight away.

MOTHER

But it doesn't happen that way. It takes time. That's why it's so terrible to see one's own blood spilt out on the earth. A fountain that gushes in seconds and has cost us years. When I reached my boy he was lying in the middle of the road. I wet my hands in his blood and licked it off. Because he was mine. You wouldn't understand that. I'd have kept a handful of his blood-soaked earth in a chalice of glass and topaz.

FATHER

There's something to hope for now. My daughter's wide in the hips and your son's strong.

MOTHER

That's what I'm hoping.

They get up.

FATHER Prepare the trays of wheat.

SERVANT They're ready.

LEONARDO'S WIFE: (*Entering.*) Good luck for the future!

MOTHER Thank you.

LEONARDO Are we going to have a fiesta?

FATHER For a short while. People can't stay long.

SERVANT Here they are.

The guests enter. The bridal couple enter arm in arm. LEONARDO leaves.

BRIDEGROOM I've never seen so many people at a wedding.

BRIDE (*Darkly.*) Nor have I.

FATHER It was magnificent.

MOTHER Whole branches of families were there.

BRIDEGROOM People who never go outside the door.

MOTHER Your father sowed and now you reap.

BRIDEGROOM I've just met cousins I never knew existed.

MOTHER They're families that live on the coast.

BRIDEGROOM (*Amused.*) They were scared of the horses.
They talk.

MOTHER (*To the BRIDE.*) What's on your mind?

BRIDE Nothing.

MOTHER Your blessings weigh heavily.

Guitars are heard.

BRIDE Like lead.

MOTHER (*Sharply.*) But they shouldn't. You should be as light as a dove.

BRIDE Are you staying here tonight?

MOTHER No. My house is empty.

BRIDE You should stay.

- FATHER (*To the MOTHER.*) Look they're taking partners to dance. Dancers from way down there on the coast.
LEONARDO enters and sits down. His WIFE stands stiffly behind him.
- MOTHER My husband's cousins. They have stamina enough to wear out the stones.
- FATHER They're wonderful to watch. Great style! This house has suddenly come to life!
He goes and takes the MOTHER to dance.
- BRIDEGROOM (*To the BRIDE.*) Did you like my sprig of azahár?
- BRIDE (*Staring fixedly at him.*) Yes.
- BRIDEGROOM It's made of wax. It'll last forever. I'd have liked to have seen your dress covered with orange blossom.
- BRIDE There was no need.
LEONARDO exits right.
- 1ST GIRL: Let's take your pins out.
- BRIDE (*To the GROOM.*) I'll be back in a minute.
- LEONARDO'S WIFE: I hope you'll be happy with my cousin.
- BRIDEGROOM I'm sure I will.
- LEONARDO'S WIFE: Just the two of you here together, never going out, building up a home. I wish I lived as far out as this!
- BRIDEGROOM Why don't you buy land out here? The hillside's cheap and it's better for bringing up children.
- LEONARDO'S WIFE: We have no money. And the way we're going!
- BRIDEGROOM Your husband's a hard worker.
- LEONARDO'S WIFE: Yes, but he likes to fly around too much. He flits from one thing to another... Restless!

SERVANT Aren't you having anything? I'm wrapping up some wine cakes for your mother. I can see she loves them.

BRIDEGROOM Give her three dozen.

LEONARDO'S WIFE: No, no. Half a dozen should be plenty.

BRIDEGROOM This is a special day.

LEONARDO'S WIFE: (*To the SERVANT.*) Where's Leonardo?

SERVANT I haven't seen him.

BRIDEGROOM He'll be out there with the guests.

LEONARDO'S WIFE: I'll go and see! (*She exits.*)

SERVANT (*Moves to have a look at the dancing couples.*)
That really is lovely.

BRIDEGROOM Aren't you dancing?

SERVANT No one's asked me.

Two GIRLS pass across. During this scene there's a lively ambience in the background with people passing.

BRIDEGROOM (*Happily.*) That's ignorance for you. Lively old girls like you dance better than the young ones.

SERVANT Trying to flirt with me, niño? Hah! What a family of machos! You're all the same. I was a little girl at your grandfather's wedding. What a man! It was like a mountain getting married.

BRIDEGROOM I'm not as tall.

SERVANT But the same twinkle in your eye. Where's your bride?

BRIDEGROOM Taking off her crown.

SERVANT Ah! Look! To eat around midnight, as you certainly won't be sleeping, I've prepared you some ham and two large glasses of the very old wine. It's in the bottom shelf of the cupboard if you need it.

LORCA

- BRIDEGROOM (*Chuckling.*) I don't eat in the middle of the night.
- SERVANT (*Teasing.*) If you don't, your bride might.
She exits.
- 1ST YOUTH: (*Entering.*) Come and have a drink with us!
- BRIDEGROOM I'm waiting for my wife.
- 2ND YOUTH: She'll keep till the early hours!
- 1ST YOUTH: That's when they're best!
- 2ND YOUTH: Just a quick one.
- BRIDEGROOM Why not?
They exit. Sounds of excitement. The BRIDE appears. From the opposite side two GIRLS run in to meet her.
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL Who did you give the first pin to? Me or her?
- BRIDE I don't remember.
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL You gave it to me, here.
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL: You gave it to me, in front of the altar.
- BRIDE (*Uneasy feeling of deep inner conflict.*) Look! I can't remember.
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL I just wish you could tell us because well...
- BRIDE (*Interrupting.*) And I really don't care. I've got a lot on my mind.
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL I'm sorry.
LEONARDO crosses backstage.
- BRIDE (*Sees LEONARDO.*) I'm not myself at the moment.
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL We wouldn't know about that!
- BRIDE You'll know when the time comes. It's an enormous step to take.
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL Are you angry?

BRIDE No. Forgive me.

2ND YOUNG GIRL For what? But the two pins mean you'll marry, right?

BRIDE Both do.

1ST YOUNG GIRL Well, now we'll see which of us marries first.

BRIDE Does it really mean so much to you?

2ND YOUNG GIRL *(Blushing.)* Yes.

BRIDE But why?

1ST YOUNG GIRL Well... *(Hugging the 2ND YOUNG GIRL.)*
They run off. The BRIDEGROOM comes in slowly on tiptoe and embraces the BRIDE from behind.

BRIDE *(Jumping.)* Let me go!

BRIDEGROOM Did I scare you?

BRIDE Oh! It's you.

BRIDEGROOM Who else? *(Pause.)* Your father or me.

BRIDE True.

BRIDEGROOM Though your father would have been more gentle.

BRIDE *(Gloomily.)* Of course.

BRIDEGROOM Because he's old. *(He hugs her very tightly and a bit roughly.)*

BRIDE *(Tonelessly.)* Don't do that!

BRIDEGROOM Why not? *(He releases her.)*

BRIDE Well...the guests can see us.
The SERVANT crosses backstage without looking at the BRIDE and GROOM.

BRIDEGROOM So? We are man and wife.

BRIDE I know...but not now...later.

BRIDEGROOM What's the matter? You're on edge!

BRIDE It's nothing... Don't go.
LEONARDO's WIFE appears.

- LEONARDO'S WIFE I don't want to interrupt.
- BRIDEGROOM What is it?
- LEONARDO'S WIFE Did my husband come through here?
- BRIDEGROOM No.
- LEONARDO'S WIFE It's just that I can't find him, and his horse isn't in the stable.
- BRIDEGROOM (*Happily.*) He's probably gone for a gallop.
The WIFE leaves uneasy. The SERVANT appears.
- SERVANT Aren't you two happy? All these good wishes?
- BRIDEGROOM I wish it was all over. My wife's a bit tired.
- SERVANT Child! What's the matter?
- BRIDE I feel as though I've been hit on the head.
- SERVANT A bride from these mountains must be strong. (*To the GROOM.*) She's yours now, hombre, so you're the only one who can put her right.
She runs out.
- BRIDEGROOM (*Putting his arms round her.*) Let's dance for a bit. (*He kisses her.*)
- BRIDE (*Anguished.*) No. I need to lie down for a while.
- BRIDEGROOM I'll come with you.
- BRIDE Are you serious? With all the people here? What would they say? Just let me rest for a moment.
- BRIDEGROOM Please yourself... But don't be like this tonight!
- BRIDE (*At the door.*) I'll be better tonight.
- BRIDEGROOM I hope so.

The MOTHER appears.

MOTHER

Son.

BRIDEGROOM

Where have you been?

MOTHER

Right in the thick of all that noise. Are you happy?

BRIDEGROOM

Yes.

MOTHER

Where's your wife?

BRIDEGROOM

Having a little siesta. A bad day for brides.

MOTHER

A bad day? It's the only good one. That was the day I came into my own.

The SERVANT appears and goes towards the BRIDE's room.

MOTHER

The day you turn the soil and plant new trees.

BRIDEGROOM

Are you leaving us?

MOTHER

Yes. I must be in my own house.

BRIDEGROOM

Alone?

MOTHER

Alone... No. My head's full of things that have happened...men, fights!

BRIDEGROOM

But that's a fight we're no longer fighting.

The SERVANT enters quickly and runs off towards the backstage area.

MOTHER

While you live...you fight.

BRIDEGROOM

I'll always obey you mother!

MOTHER

Always be affectionate with your wife and if she gets a bit moody or standoffish – caress her, first so that it hurts a little. Give her a big hug or a bite – then kiss her very gently. Not to annoy her – but just to let her know who's the boss...who gives the orders. I learnt that from your father. But as you don't have

him, there's only me to strengthen your hand.

BRIDEGROOM I'll always take your advice.
FATHER enters.

FATHER Where's my daughter?

BRIDEGROOM She's inside.

1ST YOUNG GIRL Fetch the bride and groom. We're going to dance a wedding round.

1ST YOUTH: (*To the GROOM.*) You must lead us.

FATHER (*Appearing.*) She's not there.

BRIDEGROOM No?

FATHER She must have gone up to the balcony.

BRIDEGROOM I'll go and see. (*Exits.*)
Hum of conversation and guitars.

1ST YOUNG GIRL They've already started. (*She leaves.*)

BRIDEGROOM (*Appearing.*) She's not there.

MOTHER (*Uneasy.*) No?

FATHER Where can she have gone?

SERVANT (*Appearing.*) Where on earth is the girl?

MOTHER (*Sombrely.*) We don't know.
The GROOM leaves. The guests enter.

FATHER But isn't she dancing?

SERVANT No. She's not dancing.

FATHER (*With authority.*) There's a huge crowd out there now. Go and have a look.

SERVANT I've already looked there.

FATHER (*Desperate.*) Well, where is she?

BRIDEGROOM (*Enters.*) No sign of her anywhere.

MOTHER (*To the Father.*) What's going on? Where is your daughter?
LEONARDO's WIFE enters.

LEONARDO'S WIFE They've gone! They've gone! She and Leonardo on horseback in each other's arms, like a shooting star.

FATHER I don't believe it! Not my daughter!

MOTHER Yes your daughter! Spawn of her rotten mother, and he's gone with her. But now she's my son's wife!

BRIDEGROOM (*Entering.*) Let's get after them. Who has a horse?

MOTHER Who's got a horse? Quick... Dear God! Hasn't anyone got a horse? I'll give him all I've got – my eyes – my tongue.

VOICE: (*Off.*) There's one here.

MOTHER (*To her son.*) Go! Go! Get after them!
He leaves with two YOUNG MEN.
 No! Don't you go! These people kill quick and clean. But go, yes! Go you on... I'll follow.

FATHER It can't be her. She may have flung herself into the reservoir.

MOTHER Only decent, clean women throw themselves into water. Not that one!
 And she's the wife of my son. Two families. Now there are two families at each other's throats... (*Everyone enters.*) yours and mine. Go! The lot of you and help my son!
They split into two groups.
 He's got plenty of family here from the coast and from the plains, so all of you move out...fast! Scour the woods with the force of two families. You with yours, me with mine. The moment of truth is the moment of blood. Hunt them down! Get them!
CURTAIN / BLACKOUT.

Act Three

SCENE I

*It is night. A wood. Huge tree trunks.
Shadows everywhere. Two violins are
heard. Three WOODCUTTERS enter.*

1ST WOODCUTTER So, have they found them?

2ND WOODCUTTER No. But they're searching everywhere.

3RD WOODCUTTER They'll soon find them.

2ND WOODCUTTER Ssssshhhh!

3RD WOODCUTTER What?

2ND WOODCUTTER They seem to be coming from every
direction at once.

1ST WOODCUTTER Come the moon and they'll see 'em.

2ND WOODCUTTER They should let them be.

1ST WOODCUTTER The world's a big place. There's room
for everyone.

3RD WOODCUTTER But they'll kill them.

2ND WOODCUTTER You do what you must. They were right
to make a run for it.

1ST WOODCUTTER It was mutual deception, but blood won
the day.

3RD WOODCUTTER Hmm! Blood!

1ST WOODCUTTER When the blood rises, no man can
resist it.

2ND WOODCUTTER Blood that sees light is sucked up by the
earth.

1ST WOODCUTTER So? Better dead and bloodless than alive
and rotting.

3RD WOODCUTTER Husshh!

1ST WOODCUTTER What is it? You hear something?

3RD WOODCUTTER Yes. Crickets and frogs. Night in ambush.

1ST WOODCUTTER But no sound of a horse.

3RD WOODCUTTER No.

1ST WOODCUTTER It's love they'll be making now.

2ND WOODCUTTER Her body his, and his body hers.

3RD WOODCUTTER They'll search them out, till they kill them.

1ST WOODCUTTER But by then the blood of both will be the blood of one; like two empty pitchers they'll be, just two dried up streams.

2ND WOODCUTTER It's clouding over. The moon may not appear tonight.

3RD WOODCUTTER Moon or no moon the bridegroom will find them. I saw him ride off.
Like a raging star, his face was ashen
seared with the brand of his kin.

1ST WOODCUTTER A clan of corpses that litter the street.

2ND WOODCUTTER That's it!

3RD WOODCUTTER You think they'll manage to break through the circle?

2ND WOODCUTTER Difficult, with knives and rifles covering them for ten kilometres around.

3RD WOODCUTTER He's got a good mount.

2ND WOODCUTTER But he carries a woman.

1ST WOODCUTTER And we have him covered.

2ND WOODCUTTER Like a tree with forty branches. And we'll cut him down clean and quick.

3RD WOODCUTTER There's the moon now. Come on, / we must move. (*Light floods in from the left – the rising MOON.*)

1ST WOODCUTTER Oh rising moon! Moon among the great leaves.

2ND WOODCUTTER: Conceal the blood in a shroud of jasmines.

1ST WOODCUTTER Oh solitary moon!
Verdant moon among the leaves!

2ND WOODCUTTER Silver on the bride's face.

3RD WOODCUTTER: Oh evil moon!
Leave for their love a branch in
shadow.

1ST WOODCUTTER Oh sorrowing moon!
Leave for their love a branch in
shadow.

They exit. The MOON appears from the left. The moon is a young woodcutter with a white face. The scene is flooded with an intense blue light.

MOON Round swan upon the river,
and the cathedral's gleaming eye,
dawn that is false upon the leaves;
they'll not escape! These things am I.
Who's there hiding? Who is sobbing
in the thorn bush down the valley?
The moon leaves a knife suspended
abandoned up there on the wind,
a deadly leaden ambush
that thirsts to be blood's pain and
sorrow.
I must penetrate! Freezing I'll enter
through thickest walls and window
panes!
Rip open roofs! Let me enter
your breast where I may
warm myself!
I'm freezing! My grey ashes
that form from somnolent metals
come seeking the crest of the fire
through mountains and down dark
alleys.
Upon a shoulder of jasper,
the snow bears me always aloft,

yet water that's hard and frozen,
leaves me drowning in reservoirs.

But this coming night will bestow
on my cheeks the richest dark blood,
and on the wild reeds that cluster
beneath the wide feet of the wind.
No furtive shadow, no place of refuge,
no possible means of escape!

I must penetrate human flesh
to satisfy and to warm me!
A human heart I mean to have!
It's hot blood spilling down across
the mountains of my cold white breast
I'll enter your body. Ay, let me!

To the branches.

My rays, as I want no shadow
will leave me no deep crevice hidden,
and even the shadowy trunks
will murmur with luminous gleams.
The darkening night will restore
fresh, warm blood to course through
my cheeks,
and on the wild reeds that cluster
beneath the wide feet of the wind.
Who's there hiding? Come out I say!
No! No! You'll never escape me!
Like fever on your distant horse
I'll hurl a shaft of diamond light.

*The MOON disappears among the trees
and the light dims to its previous state.*

*A BEGGAR WOMAN enters. She is
barefooted and shrouded in tenuous dark
green material. Her face is barely visible
among the folds. She is death.*

BEGGAR WOMAN: The moon is now waning
and they are approaching.
They shall not pass from here.

The murmuring river
 and whispering tree trunks
 will stifle the agonised
 flight of their screams.
 It must be here and quickly.
 My strength is now ebbing.
 On the floor of the bedroom
 the white shrouds are lying
 and the coffins are ready
 for those two heavy bodies.
 Their throats ripped and torn open.
 Let no single bird be stirring,
 so the breeze may sweep up
 their moans in her skirt,
 and carry them off over
 night blackened tree tops,
 or plunge them into quicklime.
 (*Impatiently.*) Give me light, moon!
 Give me your light

*The MOON appears and its light
 intensifies.*

MOON: Now they're approaching.
 Some along the glen, others
 along the river.
 I'll shed my light on the boulders.
 What is it you'll need?

BEGGAR WOMAN: Nothing.

MOON: The air is crystallising,
 with a double edge
 that's sharpened.

BEGGAR WOMAN: So illuminate their waistcoats,
 and prise open all their buttons
 so that razor sharpened flick knives
 will surely find their mark.

MOON But see it takes them a long time to
 die.
 So blood with its gentle hiss

may ooze its way through my fingers.
Look how my valleys of ash awaken
and yearn for the trembling
gush of the fountain!

BEGGAR WOMAN: Let us be certain they pass not this
stream.

MOON: Silence! See where they come!

The MOON goes. The scene darkens.

BEGGAR WOMAN: So be quick! Much more light.
Did you hear me?
They just cannot escape us!

*The GROOM and 1ST YOUTH enter. The
BEGGAR WOMAN crouches and covers her
face with her cloak.*

BEGGAR WOMAN: This is the way!

1ST YOUTH: There's no way you'll find them.

BRIDEGROOM (*Determined.*) Oh yes, I'll find them.

1ST YOUTH: I'm sure they cut round the other way.

BRIDEGROOM No. A moment ago I felt the thud of
those hooves.

1ST YOUTH: Could well have been another horse.

BRIDEGROOM (*Intensely.*) Listen. There's only one
horse in the world, and this is it. D'you
understand? And if you want to follow
me, then follow me and stay silent.

1ST YOUTH: I only wanted...

BRIDEGROOM Shut up. I know we'll find them here.
You see this arm. Well, it's not my arm.
It's my brother's arm, my father's, and
my whole dead family's. There's strength
in this arm to tear out a tree by its roots.
So let's move quickly, the teeth of my
people are clenched so deep within me
I can hardly breathe.

BEGGAR WOMAN: (*Moaning.*) Ayee!

- 1ST YOUTH: You hear that?
- BRIDEGROOM You go that way and we'll surround them.
- 1ST YOUTH: This is a manhunt.
- BRIDEGROOM The greatest manhunt ever in these parts.
- The YOUTH goes. The GROOM moves quickly to the left and trips over the BEGGAR WOMAN.*
- BEGGAR WOMAN: Ayee!
- BRIDEGROOM What do you want?
- BEGGAR WOMAN: I'm cold.
- BRIDEGROOM Which way are you going?
- BEGGAR WOMAN: (*With the typical whine of a beggar woman.*) Far away...over there!
- BRIDEGROOM Which way did you come?
- BEGGAR WOMAN: A long, long way...that way!
- BRIDEGROOM Did you see a man and woman on horseback, galloping for their lives?
- BEGGAR WOMAN: (*Rousing herself.*) Wait! (*She gazes at him.*) What a handsome young man. (*She pauses.*) But even more handsome asleep!
- BRIDEGROOM Answer me straight! Did you see them?
- BEGGAR WOMAN: Don't be in such a hurry. Those magnificent shoulders should be taking your weight – not those tiny feet.
- BRIDEGROOM (*Shaking her.*) I'm asking you if you saw them! Did they come this way?
- BEGGAR WOMAN: (*Strongly.*) No, but they're coming down the slope – listen! Can't you hear that?
- BRIDEGROOM No.
- BEGGAR WOMAN: Don't you know that path?
- BRIDEGROOM Don't worry, I'll find it.
- BEGGAR WOMAN: I'll show you. I know this region.

BRIDEGROOM *(Impatiently.)* Come on then! Which way?

BEGGAR WOMAN: *(With quiet power.)* That way.

They leave quickly. In the distance the sound of two violins which suggest the forest. The WOODCUTTERS enter. They carry axes on their shoulders. They move slowly among the tree trunks.

1ST WOODCUTTER Oh rising death!
Death among leaves that are shadows.

2ND WOODCUTTER Staunch the flow of blood as it gushes!

1ST WOODCUTTER Oh solitary death!
Death among the leaves now withered.

3RD WOODCUTTER No flower may you lay at your
wedding!

2ND WOODCUTTER Oh sorrowing death! Leave now for
their love a branch that's in shadow.

1ST WOODCUTTER Oh evil death! Leave now, for their
love, a branch that's in shadow!

*They exit slowly as they're speaking.
LEONARDO and the BRIDE appear.*

LEONARDO SShhh. Quiet!

BRIDE I'll go alone from here. Just leave me!
You turn back!

LEONARDO Be quiet!

BRIDE With your teeth,
with your hands,
be as it may
release from my untainted throat
the choking metal of this band.
Leave me abandoned and confined
there to dwell in my house of earth.
And if you don't want to kill me
as well you might a tiny snake,
place the barrel of your shot gun
between the fingers of this bride.
Ay! My remorse and this torment

runs liquid, like fire, through my head!
My tongue's pierced with glass that has
shivered into splinters.

LEONARDO We are through the pass; so hush now!
They're very close behind us
and I must take you with me.

BRIDE Well, it'll be by force then!

LEONARDO By force? And who was the first to go
down the stairs?

BRIDE Yes, me. It was me.

LEONARDO And who was it put on my horse's new
bridle?

BRIDE Yes me. It was me.

LEONARDO And whose were the hands that lovingly
tightened my spurs?

BRIDE These hands now ever more your
hands,
but on seeing you first,
I'd such longing
to tear apart your blue branches,
your veins that trickle and murmur.
I love you! I love you! Now leave me!
For if I could I would kill you.
I would bind you up in a shroud,
with bordered edges of violet.
Ay! My remorse! and this torment
runs liquid like fire through my head.

LEONARDO My tongue's pierced with glass that has
shivered in splinters!
Because I wanted to forget
and put a wall of thickest stone
'twixt our houses, yours and mine.
It's the truth. Don't you remember?
When I saw you in the distance
it was sand I threw in my eyes.
But I found myself on horseback

and the horse went straight to your
door.

With those wedding pins of silver
you drew blood and turned mine to
pitch.

And the dream we shared had
festered,
my body had sown rotten weeds.
But it's not in me that the fault lies,
for you'll find the fault in the earth,
in your breasts with all their fragrance,
and the gentle sweep of your hair.

BRIDE

There's just no reason to loving!
I don't want your food or your bed.
In the day there isn't a moment
that I don't want to be with you.
You drag me and I'm at your side.
You tell me: Go! but I follow.
Through the air, it's you I pursue,
like the wisps of grass that are wind
blown.
I've left a strong man who's decent,
his family, his kith and kin,
in the middle of my wedding
with my bridal wreath on my head.
And they will punish you for it,
and I don't want that to happen,
just leave me here, and go you, now!
No one will ever defend you.

LEONARDO

Birds that you hear in the morning,
who sing that it's dawn through the
trees,
the night you can now see dying
along those sharp edges of stone.
Let's find a shadowy corner
where you'll know I'll always love you,

who gives a damn for opinion,
its venom won't ever touch us. (*He hugs
her passionately.*)

BRIDE

And at your feet I'll be sleeping,
always to guard what you're dreaming.
O'er the fields you'll see me gaze
naked.

With controlled intensity.

And hot I'll grow, like the hot bitch I
am!
What I see of your beauty just burns
me.

LEONARDO

Fire mixed with fire flares
like tinder.
The same little pillar, of flame
will kill two wheats heads together.
Let's go...

He drags her by the arm.

BRIDE

Where are you taking me?

LEONARDO

Where those who follow can't find us.
Those men who are circling round us.
Where I can gaze at you safely.

BRIDE:

(*Sardonically.*) From fair to fair you'll
carry me,
shunned by every decent woman,
a mockery for all to see,
the wedding sheets I'll never use
like banners fluttering in the wind.

LEONARDO

I, too, would want to leave you
if I also thought as they do.
But wherever you go, I go.
You, me, we are one.
Take one step. Try to!
Nails of the moon have now fused us.
My waist and your hips are as one.

This entire scene is violent and full of sensuality.

BRIDE

Listen.

LEONARDO

They're all coming.

BRIDE

Run, man!

It's only right I should die here
my feet sunk deep in the water,
thorns for a crown that was bridal.
The leaves should cry out my anguish,
a young girl lost but a virgin.

LEONARDO

Hushh! They're coming.

BRIDE

Go!

LEONARDO

Be quiet woman. Don't let them hear us.
You must leave first. Go, and quickly.

The BRIDE hesitates.

BRIDE

Both together!

LEONARDO

(Embracing her.) Whatever you want!
Only death can rip us apart.

BRIDE

And dead I'd certainly be.

They exit with their arms round one another. Slowly the MOON appears. The intense blue light again floods the stage. The two violins are heard. Then, two long piercing screams cut the music short. At the second scream the BEGGAR WOMAN appears and stands with her back to the audience. She spreads wide her cloak like the wings of a huge bird. The MOON stands absolutely still, frozen. The curtain descends in total silence.

End of Scene One.

SCENE II

A white room with arches and thick walls. To the right and left, white stairs.

*At the back a great arch and a wall
the same colour. The floor must also be
dazzling white. This simple room should
have the monumental feel of a church.
There is no shadow or any grey. Nothing
to give any sense of perspective. Two
GIRLS in dark blue are winding skeins of
crimson wool.*

1ST YOUNG GIRL

Madeja, Madeja,
what shape shall you spin?

2ND YOUNG GIRL

A dress of fine jasmine,
of cloth paper thin.
At four in the morning
born to lie dead at ten.
To be thread that's woollen,
that is chaining your feet,
a knot that is choking
the white bridal wreath.

LITTLE GIRL:

(Singing.) Went you to the wedding?

1ST YOUNG GIRL

No.

LITTLE GIRL

Neither did I!
What can have happened
'midst the shoots of the vineyard?
What can have happened
'neath the branch of the olives?
What went wrong
that no one has returned?
Did you go to the wedding?

2ND YOUNG GIRL

We've already said no.

LITTLE GIRL:

(Leaving.) And I didn't go!

2ND YOUNG GIRL

Madeja, Madeja,
What song will you sing?

1ST YOUNG GIRL

Of wounds that are waxen,
of myrtle's sharp pain.
Of morning's soft slumber,
of night's vigil long.

- LITTLE GIRL: *(In the doorway.)* The woollen thread
catches on sharp flinty stones.
The high blue sierras
allow it to pass.
Faster, faster, faster,
and at last to arrive
to plunge in the knife blade
and tear off the bread.
- She goes.*
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL Madeja, madeia / Wool spindle, wool
spindle
what have you to say?
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL Her lover's now silent.
The groom crimson and mute.
By the still water's edge
I saw both laid out.
*(She falls silent looking at the skein of
wool.)*
- LITTLE GIRL: *(Appearing at the door.)*
Faster, faster, faster
the thread's ending, here.
Bodies now mud-caked, I'm sure they
lie near.
Stiff corpses outstretched,
ivory shrouds on their bier.
- She leaves. LEONARDO'S WIFE and
MOTHER-IN-LAW appear, anguished.*
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL Are they coming?
- MOTHER-IN-LAW *(Bitterly.)* We don't know.
- 2ND YOUNG GIRL What happened at the wedding?
- 1ST YOUNG GIRL Tell us.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW *(Dryly.)* Nothing.
- LEONARDO'S WIFE I want to go back. I want to know
everything.
- MOTHER-IN-LAW *(Controlled power.)* You, to your home
now.

Courageous and alone in your dwelling.
To grow decrepit and to lament.
But now with your door shut firmly.
Shut out the dead and the living.
We'll seal the windows forever.
Let battering rains at nightfall
lash grass that has since grown bitter.

LEONARDO'S WIFE What can have happened?

MOTHER-IN-LAW Does it matter?
Find for your face a black veil to cover.
Your children are still your children,
blood of your blood, so with ashes
make a cross where he once had a
pillow.
They leave.

BEGGAR WOMAN: (*At the door.*) A morsel of bread, little
children.

LITTLE GIRL Go away!
The GIRLS huddle together.

BEGGAR WOMAN: Why?

LITTLE GIRL: Because you whine, go away!

1ST YOUNG GIRL Niña!

BEGGAR WOMAN: I could have begged for
your eyes. A cloud of birds
fly behind me: would you like one?

LITTLE GIRL: I just want to go!

2ND YOUNG GIRL (*To the BEGGAR WOMAN.*) Take no notice
of her!

1ST YOUNG GIRL Did you come by the path along the
stream?

BEGGAR WOMAN: That's the way I came.

1ST YOUNG GIRL (*Timidly.*) Can I ask you something?

BEGGAR WOMAN: I saw both, soon they will come like
two torrents still now, at last, there by
the massive boulders,

two men stretched out 'neath the
hooves of the stallion.

Dead they lie in a dark night of
splendours.

With great satisfaction.

Dead, yes, irrevocably dead.

1ST YOUNG GIRL

Shut up, old woman, shut up!

BEGGAR WOMAN:

Where what once were their eyes, lie
now strewn dead flowers.

Where what once were their teeth –
frozen snow in hard fistfuls.

Two antagonists fell and the bride
returns

her skirt and her hair are spattered
with bloodstains.

Beneath two white shrouds two bodies
are coming.

Aloft are they borne on sturdy young
shoulders.

That's how it was: nothing more
and quite fitting,

over sand now tarnished, and flowers
that are golden.

*She goes. The GIRLS incline their heads
and begin to leave rhythmically.*

1ST GIRL:

Sand that's now tarnished.

2ND GIRL:

Over the flower that is golden.

LITTLE GIRL:

Over the flower that is golden.

Two young bodies are borne
from the stream.

Sun burnished comes one,
swarthy the other.

What shadowy nightingale soars and
weeps

over flowers that have now turned
golden!

*She goes. The stage now remains empty.
The MOTHER and a NEIGHBOUR
appear. The NEIGHBOUR is weeping.*

MOTHER

Be quiet.

NEIGHBOUR

I can't help it.

MOTHER

I said be quiet. (*At the door.*) Is there no one here? (*She puts her hands to her forehead.*) My son's only an armful of withered flowers now. My son's now a voice fading beyond the mountains. (*To the NEIGHBOUR angrily.*) Will you shut up! I want no weeping in this house. Yours are tears from your eyes and nothing more. Mine will come when I'm alone, from the soles of my feet, from the very root of my being, and they'll burn hotter than blood.

NEIGHBOUR

Come home with me. Don't stay here.

MOTHER

Here. Here's where I belong. In peace. They're all dead now. At midnight I'll sleep freed of the terror of rifles and knives. Other mothers will be straining out of windows, lashed with rain, peering to see the faces of their sons. Not me. I'll fashion a dove of frozen ivory from my dreams, to carry camellias of frost over the graveyard. But no, graveyard, no! No graveyard. Rather a cradle of earth blanketed and rocked by the sky.

A woman in black enters. She goes to the right and kneels.

(*To the NEIGHBOUR.*) Take your hands from your face. There are terrible days ahead. I don't want to see anyone. Just the earth and me. Just me and my grief and these four walls. Ayee! Ayee! (*She kneels overcome.*)

NEIGHBOUR Show yourself a little pity.

MOTHER (*Smooths her hair back.*) I must stay calm.
 (*She sits.*) Because the neighbours will come and I don't want them to see me so poor, so lost! A mother without a son anymore who she can press to her lips.
The BRIDE appears. She comes without the orange blossom and wearing a black shawl.

NEIGHBOUR (*Furious.*) Where do you think you're going?

BRIDE I'm coming here.

MOTHER (*To the NEIGHBOUR.*) Who is it?

NEIGHBOUR Don't you recognise her?

MOTHER That's why I'm asking you who she is. Because I mustn't recognise her so I don't sink my teeth in her throat. Viper!
 (*She moves towards the BRIDE in a rage then stops. To the NEIGHBOUR.*) Look at her! There she stands sobbing away and me, dry eyed, and not even ripping her eyes out. I don't understand myself. Can it be I didn't love my son? But his name! Where's his good name? (*She strikes the BRIDE who falls to the floor.*)

NEIGHBOUR Dear Christ! (*Tries to separate them.*)

BRIDE (*To the NEIGHBOUR.*) Let her. I came so she'd kill me. So they could carry me off with them, (*To the MOTHER.*) but not with their hands, with grappling hooks, with a sickle with such force that you could smash it on my bones. Let her go! I want her to know I'm clean. I may be mad, but at least they can bury me knowing that no man has ever looked at himself in the whiteness of my breasts.

MOTHER

Oh, shut up! What does that matter to me?

BRIDE

Because I went off with the other one. I just went. (*Anguished.*) You'd have done the same. I was a woman enflamed, burning with open sores inside and out. And your son was a tiny drop of water that I hoped would give me children, safety, health, but the other one was a dark river choked with bracken, that hinted to me the murmur of its reeds, and its whispered song. I needed your son who was like a tiny boy of cold water – but the other one threw at me hundreds of birds that blocked my way, and left frost on the wounds of this poor withered woman, this girl seared by fire. I didn't want it to happen that way. You must believe me. It was not what I wanted. Your son was my whole ambition, and, I did not betray him. But the other one's arm dragged me like the sea in an undertow, like the butt of a mule, and would always have dragged me, always, always, always, even if I'd been an old woman and your son and all our children had tried to pull me back by my hair.

A NEIGHBOUR enters.

MOTHER

She's not to blame, nor me! (*Sarcastically.*) So who's to blame? Feeble, reckless, sleepless woman who throws away a crown of azahár for a bit of bed warmed by another woman.

BRIDE

Say no more. Take your revenge on me. Here I am. See how soft my throat is. Easier than cutting a dahlia in your garden. But that, no! Chaste I am!

Chaste as a new born child, and strong enough to prove it. Light the fire. Give me your hand. We'll both put our hands in the flames. You for your son and I for my body. You'll take yours out first.

Another NEIGHBOUR enters.

MOTHER

What do I care about your good name? What does your death matter to me? What does anything matter? Blessed is the wheat because my son lies beneath it. Blessed is the rain because it moistens the faces of the dead. Blessed be God who lays us out, side by side, to rest.

Another NEIGHBOUR enters.

BRIDE

Let me weep with you.

MOTHER

Weep then. But there by the door.

The LITTLE GIRL enters. The BRIDE remains by the door. The MOTHER centre stage. LEONARDO'S WIFE enters and moves down left.

LEONARDO'S WIFE

He was a proud, handsome horseman, now a mound where snow lies heavy. He rode through fairs and mountains to the arms of many women. Now moss that grows black at nightfall death's crown adorns his forehead.

MOTHER

A sunflower of your mother.
Earth's reflection in a mirror.
Upon your breast they'll fasten
A cross of bitter oleander.
The shroud with which you're covered
of silk that is translucent.
And the water will weep its lament
'twixt the stillness of your fingers.

WOMAN

Ayee! Now four lads return
with weary bent shoulders!

- BRIDE: Ayee! Four gallant young lads
 bear death home through the wind!
- MOTHER Neighbours!
- LITTLE GIRL: Here they come.
- MOTHER The same for us all
 The cross, the cross.
- WOMEN: Nails now sacred.
 Sacred cross.
 Name that's sacred.
 Jesus Christ.
- BRIDE May the cross protect the living and
 the dead.
- MOTHER Neighbours, with a knife,
 a tiny flick knife,
 on a day that was appointed,
 between two o'clock and three,
 those two men for love, murdered one
 another.
 One thrust with a flick knife,
 a tiny little flick knife
 in the palm of your hand it's barely
 contained,
 but it penetrates so cleanly
 through man's frozen flesh astonished,
 and there it stops at the place
 appointed
 where enmeshed and trapped in an
 ambush
 lies the darkest root of a scream.
- BRIDE And this is a lethal little flick knife,
 a tiny lethal flick knife
 in the palm of your hand, it's barely
 contained:
 fish without scales or a river,
 on a day that was appointed
 between two o'clock and three,
 two hardy men it dispatches

with their lips now turning yellow.

As a litany

MOTHER

Y esto es un cuchillo,

BRIDE

un cuchillito

MOTHER

que apenas cabe en la mano;

BRIDE

pez sin escamas ni río

MOTHER

para que un día señalado

BRIDE

entre las dos y las tres

MOTHER

con este cuchillo

BRIDE

se quedan dos hombres duros

MOTHER

con dos labios amarillos.

MOTHER

In the palm of your hand
it's barely contained,
but it penetrates so cleanly
through man's frozen flesh astonished,
and there it stops,
at the place appointed,
where trapped, enmeshed
and trembling
lies the dark root of a scream.

The NEIGHBOURS are kneeling, praying.

CURTAIN

DOÑA ROSITA THE SPINSTER

or

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

A play by Federico García Lorca (1935)

In a new translation

by Rebecca Morahan and Auriol Smith

Characters

THE AUNT

THE UNCLE

DOÑA ROSITA

THE HOUSEKEEPER

THE NEPHEW

FIRST MANOLA

SECOND MANOLA

THIRD MANOLA

FIRST SPINSTER

SECOND SPINSTER

THIRD SPINSTER

MOTHER OF THE SPINSTERS

FIRST AYOLA

SECOND AYOLA

SEÑOR X

DON MARTÍN

THE YOUTH

WORKMAN 1

WORKMAN 2

*The play is set in Granada between 1885 and 1910 in the house of
the Aunt and Uncle*

ACT I 1885

ACT II 1900

ACT III 1910

The first public performance of this translation of *Doña Rosita* was produced at Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, on 24 March 2004, with the following cast:

THE AUNT, Sheila Reid

THE UNCLE / WORKMAN 1, Tim Hardy

DOÑA ROSITA, Paula Stockbridge

THE HOUSEKEEPER, Anna Carteret

THE NEPHEW / THE YOUTH, Michael Rouse

FIRST MANOLA / FIRST SPINSTER, Helen Anderson Lee

SECOND MANOLA / FIRST AYOLA, Nicole Tongue

THIRD MANOLA / SECOND AYOLA, Rina Mahoney

SECOND SPINSTER, Sam Dowson

THIRD SPINSTER, Justine Koos

MOTHER OF THE SPINSTERS, Caroline John

SEÑOR X / DON MARTIN, Ian Angus Wilkie

WORKMAN 2, Kevin Leach

Director Auriol Smith

Assistant Director Adam Barnard

Designer Ti Green

Lighting John Harris

Choreography Nicole Tongue

Musical Director Justine Koos

Stage Manager Stuart Burgess

Original music composed by John Dalby

Act One (1885)

Room with an exit leading into a greenhouse.

- UNCLE Where are my seeds?
- HOUSEKEEPER They were there.
- UNCLE Well they are not there now.
- AUNT Hellebore, fuchsias and chrysanthemums,
Louis Passy violets and silver-white altair
with heliotrope points.
- UNCLE You must take care with the flowers.
- HOUSEKEEPER If that's meant for me...
- AUNT Be quiet, don't answer back.
- UNCLE It's meant for everyone. Yesterday I found
my dahlia seeds trampled into the ground.
(*He goes into the greenhouse.*) None of you
appreciate the importance of my greenhouse;
not since 1807, when the Countess of
Wandes produced a musk rose, has anyone
in Granada succeeded in growing another,
except me, not even the botanist at the
university. You ought to have more respect
for my plants.
- HOUSEKEEPER Don't I respect them?
- AUNT Ssh! You're as bad as each other.
- HOUSEKEEPER Yes, Señora. But it's not me who says that
with all this flower-watering and all the water
everywhere we'll soon have frogs leaping out
of the sofa.
- AUNT But then you do love smelling the flowers.
- HOUSEKEEPER No, Señora. The smell of flowers puts me in
mind of a child's funeral, or of nuns taking
holy vows, or a church altar. Of sad things.
Give me an orange or a ripe quince and
you can forget the roses for all I care. But
here...roses to the right, basil to the left,

anemones, sage, petunias and those new-fangled flowers that are so fashionable now, chrysanthemums, with their heads all ruffled like a gypsy girl's. How I'd love to see a pear tree planted in this garden, or a cherry tree, or a persimmon!

AUNT So you could eat the fruit!

HOUSEKEEPER Well that's what a mouth's for...as they used to say in my village:

Your mouth is made for eating
Your legs are made for dancing
And there is a woman's thing...

She stops, moves closer to the AUNT and whispers to her.

AUNT Good Lord! (*She makes the sign of the cross.*)

HOUSEKEEPER That's village rudeness for you. (*She makes the sign of the cross.*)

ROSITA (*Rushes in. She wears a rose-pink dress in the style of 1885, with mutton leg sleeves and decorated with ribbons.*) My hat! Where is my hat? The bells of San Luis¹ have rung thirty times already!

HOUSEKEEPER I left it on the table.

ROSITA Well it's not there now. (*They look for it.*)
The HOUSEKEEPER exits.

AUNT Have you looked in the wardrobe?
The AUNT exits.

HOUSEKEEPER I can't find it.

ROSITA Is it possible that none of you knows where my hat is?

HOUSEKEEPER Wear the blue one with the daisies.

ROSITA You must be mad.

HOUSEKEEPER Not as mad as you.

AUNT (*Enters.*) Here it is! Off you go!

ROSITA takes it and rushes out.

HOUSEKEEPER She wants everything at the double. Today she'd like it to be the day after tomorrow already. She flies off and slips through our fingers. Every day when she was little I had to tell her the story of when she'd be an old woman: 'My Rosita is now eighty...'; it was always the same. When have you ever seen her sit down to do lacework, or festoon points, or draw threads to decorate a cap for herself?

AUNT Never.

HOUSEKEEPER She can't sit still, she's like a cat on a hot stove.

AUNT Mind what you say!

HOUSEKEEPER If I were to mind what I said, you'd never hear anything new in this house.

AUNT It's true that I've never liked saying 'no' to her. Who'd want to upset a child with no father or mother?

HOUSEKEEPER No father, nor mother, not even a little dog to bark for her, but she has an uncle and aunt who are worth their weight in gold.
(*She hugs her.*)

UNCLE (*Off.*) Now this is really too much!

AUNT Holy Mary!

UNCLE It's one thing to have my seeds trampled on but it is simply intolerable that the rose tree I love most should have its little leaves knocked off. It means more to me than the musk rose, the Hispid, the Pompon, the Damask or Queen Isabel's Eglantine. (*To the AUNT.*) Come in, come in here and see for yourself.

AUNT Is it ruined?

- UNCLE No, nothing very serious has happened to it,
but it could have done.
- HOUSEKEEPER Heaven help us!
- UNCLE What I want to know is: who knocked the
flowerpot over?
- HOUSEKEEPER Don't look at me.
- UNCLE Was it me?
- HOUSEKEEPER And there are no cats or dogs, no gusts
of wind that might come in through the
window?
- AUNT That'll do. Go and sweep out the greenhouse.
- HOUSEKEEPER Obviously one is forbidden to speak in this
house.
- UNCLE It's a rose you have never seen before; a
surprise I had ready for you. Because the
rosa reclinata with drooping petals may
be incredible, as is the *inermis* that has no
thorns; what a marvel eh? not one thorn!
and the *mirtifolia*, that comes from Belgium,
and the *sulfurata*, which glows in the dark.
But this rose is the rarest of them all. The
botanists call it *rosa mutabile*, which means
mutable, 'which changes'... There's a
description and an illustration of it in this
book, look! (*He opens the book.*) It's red in the
morning, in the evening it turns white and at
night it sheds all its petals.
- When she opens in the morning,
blood red is her hue.
The dew dare not touch her
for fear of being burned.
Wide open at midday
she is as hard as coral.
The sun spies through the glass
to see her luminous glow.
When high in the branches

the birds begin to sing
 and the evening swoons
 into the violets of the sea,
 she whitens to a whiteness
 as of salt upon a cheek.
 And when the night calls
 on the moon's soft metal horn
 and the stars appear
 as the breezes fade away,
 on the very edge of darkness,
 her petals begin to fall.

AUNT And has it any buds yet?

UNCLE One that has started to open.

AUNT Which will last for just one day?

UNCLE Just one. But on that day I plan to stay by its
 side to watch it turning white.

ROSITA (*Entering.*) My parasol.

UNCLE Her parasol.

AUNT (*Loudly.*) The parasol!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Appears.*) Here is the parasol!

*ROSITA takes the parasol and kisses her
 UNCLE and AUNT.*

ROSITA How do I look?

UNCLE A picture.

AUNT In a class of your own.

ROSITA (*Opening the parasol.*) And now?

HOUSEKEEPER For God's sake close the parasol, you musn't
 open it indoors! It brings bad luck!

By the wheel of San Bartolomé²
 and the rod of San José³
 and the sacred laurel branch,
 enemy be gone
 by the four corners of Jerusalem.

They all laugh. The UNCLE exits.

ROSITA (*Closing the parasol.*) There!

HOUSEKEEPER Never do that again...for Chr-ying out loud!

ROSITA Goodness!

AUNT What were you going to say?

HOUSEKEEPER But I didn't say it!

ROSITA (*Exits laughing.*) See you later!

AUNT Who's going with you?

ROSITA (*Puts her head round the door.*) I'm going with the Manolas.⁴

ROSITA exits.

HOUSEKEEPER And with her young man.

AUNT I think her young man is otherwise engaged.

HOUSEKEEPER I don't know which I like best, her young man, or her. (*The AUNT sits to do some lace work with bobbins.*) A pair of cousins so precious they should be kept behind glass like the best china; and if they were to die, God forbid, embalm them and place them in a shrine of mirrors and snow. Which one of them do you love most? (*She starts cleaning.*)

AUNT I love them both, as my niece and nephew.

HOUSEKEEPER Like two apples in a basket, all the same...

AUNT Rosita grew up with me...

HOUSEKEEPER Exactly. I don't believe in blood ties. For me it's a matter of principle. Blood runs through our veins, but you can't see it. You care more for a second cousin that you see every day than for a brother who is far away. Why? I'll tell you.

AUNT Get on with your cleaning, woman.

HOUSEKEEPER Alright. One can't so much as open one's mouth in this house. I bring up a beautiful child and this is what I get. I abandon my own children in a hovel shivering with hunger...

AUNT More likely with cold.

- HOUSEKEEPER Shivering with everything, and then I'm told to 'shut up!'; and because I am a servant I can do nothing but shut up, which is what I do, and I can't answer back and tell you...
- AUNT Tell me what...?
- HOUSEKEEPER To leave those bobbins with that clickety-clacking because by head is going to explode with clickety-clacking!
- AUNT (*Laughing.*) Go and see who's at the door.
It is silent on stage except for the clicking of the bobbins.
- VOICE (*Off.*) Fine chamomile from the Sierra!!
- AUNT (*Talking to herself.*) We must buy some more chamomile. Sometimes we need it... Next time he comes...thirty-seven, thirty-eight.
- CRIER'S VOICE (*Very far off.*) Fine chamomile from the Sierra!!
- AUNT (*Placing a pin.*) And forty.
- NEPHEW (*Entering.*) Aunt.
- AUNT (*Not looking at him.*) Hello, sit down if you like. Rosita has already gone out.
- NEPHEW Who did she go with?
- AUNT With the Manolas. (*Pause. Looking at the NEPHEW.*) Something is the matter.
- NEPHEW Yes.
- AUNT (*Worried.*) I can almost guess what it is. I hope I am mistaken.
- NEPHEW No. Read this.
- AUNT (*Reads.*) Of course, it's what was to be expected. That's why I was against your courtship of Rosita. I knew that sooner or later you would have to go and join your parents. And it's not as if it were just next door! It's forty days' journey from here to

- Tucamán.⁵ If I were younger and a man, I would strike you across the face.
- NEPHEW It's not my fault I love my cousin. Do you imagine I want to go? I want nothing more than to stay here, that's why I've come.
- AUNT Stay here! Stay here! It's your duty to go. It's a large farm and your father is old. It's up to me to make you get on that boat. But you will leave me to a life of bitterness. I hardly dare think of your cousin. You are going to pierce her heart with an arrow of purple ribbons. Now she'll learn that linen is not just to embroider flowers on but also to dry her tears.
- NEPHEW What should I do?
- AUNT You should go. Remember your father is my brother. Here you are no more than an idle wanderer in the city's gardens, there you will work the land.
- NEPHEW But it's just that I would like...
- AUNT To get married? Are you mad? When you have secured your future. And take Rosita with you, no? Over my dead body, and your uncle's.
- NEPHEW It's all just talk. I know only too well that I can't. But I want Rosita to wait for me. Because I'll come back soon.
- AUNT If you don't run off with some Tucamán girl first! My tongue should have stuck to the roof of my mouth before consenting to your engagement: because my little girl is going to be left alone inside these four walls, while you will be going free across the ocean, down those rivers, through those grapefruit groves, and my little girl here, each day the same as the last, and you there: with a horse and a gun to shoot the pheasants.

- NEPHEW You've no reason to speak to me like that.
I gave my word and I will keep to it. It is
because he kept his word that my father is in
South America and you know...
- AUNT (*Softly.*) Quiet.
- NEPHEW I will be quiet. But don't confuse respect with
a lack of honour.
- AUNT (*With Andalusian irony.*) Oh please forgive
me! I had forgotten that you are a man now.
- HOUSEKEEPER (*Enters, crying.*) If he were a man, he wouldn't
go.
- AUNT (*Forcefully.*) Silence!
The HOUSEKEEPER sobs.
- NEPHEW I will be back in a few moments. Please tell
her.
- AUNT Don't worry I will. It's always the old who
must bear the burden of life's difficulties.
The NEPHEW exits.
- HOUSEKEEPER Oh my poor child! Oh what a shame! God
take pity on her! That's how the men of
today behave! Even if it meant begging in
the streets I'd stay by the side of this precious
jewel. Tears are coming to this house again.
Oh Señora! (*Pulling herself together.*) May the
sea-serpent eat him alive!
- AUNT It's in God's hands!
- HOUSEKEEPER By the sesame seed
and the three holy questions
by the cinnamon flower,
may his nights be sleepless
and his seeds be fruitless.
By the well of San Nicolas⁶
may his salt turn to poison.
*She takes a jug of water and makes the sign of
the cross on the floor.*

- AUNT Stop cursing. Get on with your work.
The HOUSEKEEPER leaves. Laughter can be heard. The AUNT exits.
- 1ST MANOLA (*Entering and closing her parasol.*) Ay!
- 2ND MANOLA (*Does the same.*) Ay, how cool!
- 3RD MANOLA (*Does the same.*) Ay!
- ROSITA (*Does the same.*) For whom are the sighs of
my three lovely Manolas?
- 1ST MANOLA For no-one.
- 2ND MANOLA For the wind.
- 3RD MANOLA For a man who'd be my lover.
- ROSITA Whose hands will catch the sighs
as they fall from your mouths?
- 1ST MANOLA The wall.
- 2ND MANOLA A certain portrait.
- 3RD MANOLA The lace on my bedcover.
- ROSITA I want to sigh as well.
Ay, dear friends! Ay, Manolas!
- 1ST MANOLA Who'll catch your sighs?
- ROSITA Two eyes
that make the darkness light
whose lashes are grapevines,
where the dawn sleeps. Eyes,
that despite their blackness
are bright, as poppies in the dusk.
- 1ST MANOLA Wrap a ribbon round that sigh!
- 2ND MANOLA Ay!
- 3RD MANOLA You lucky girl.
- 1ST MANOLA Lucky girl!
- ROSITA Don't try to fool me, for I have
heard certain rumours about you.
- 1ST MANOLA Rumours are wild mustard.
- 2ND MANOLA And the chorus of the waves.

ROSITA I shall tell you.

1ST MANOLA Begin.

3RD MANOLA Rumours are like garlands.

ROSITA Granada, Elvira street
 where the Manolas live
 the girls who go to the Alhambra
 in threes and fours, alone.
 One is dressed in green,
 another in lilac, and the third
 wears a Scottish bodice
 with ribbons hanging down.
 The two in front are herons
 the one behind a dove,
 revealing in the avenues
 mysterious muslin cloths.
 Oh, how dark the Alhambra is!
 Where will the Manolas go?
 While suffering in the shadows
 are the fountain and the rose?
 What young men await them?
 Beneath which myrtle do they rest?
 Which hands steal perfumes from
 the two round flowers at their breast?
 No-one goes with them, no-one;
 two herons and a dove.
 But in this world are men
 who hide amongst the leaves.
 The bells of the cathedral
 are carried by the breeze.
 The Genil lulls its oxen
 and the Dauro⁷ its butterflies.
 The night arrives, laden,
 its dark hills in shadow lie.
 One girl reveals her shoes
 peeping out beneath pale lace;
 the eldest opens wide her eyes,
 the youngest narrows her gaze.
 Who can these three be,

high-breasted and long-trained?
Why do they flutter their kerchiefs?
Where do they go so late?
Granada, Elvira street,
where the Manolas live
the girls who go to the Alhambra
in threes and fours, alone.

1ST MANOLA Let the ripples of your rumour
wash over Granada's roofs.

2ND MANOLA Which of us has a lover?

ROSITA None.

2ND MANOLA Shall I tell the truth?

ROSITA

Go on.

3RD MANOLA Our bridal shifts are trimmed
with laces of pure frost.

ROSITA But...

1ST MANOLA The night is our friend.

ROSITA But...

2ND MANOLA Through the darkened streets.

1ST MANOLA We walk to the Alhambra
 in threes and fours, alone.

3RD MANOLA Ay!

2ND MANOLA Be quiet.

3RD MANOLA Why?

2ND MANOLA Ay!

1ST MANOLA Ay, let no-one hear us!

ROSITA Alhambra, jasmine of sorrow
 where the moon rests.

HOUSEKEEPER Child, your Aunt is asking for you. (*Very sad.*)

ROSITA Have you been crying?

HOUSEKEEPER (*Controlling herself*) No...it's just that I...
something I...

ROSITA Don't scare me. What is it? (*She exits quickly, looking at the HOUSEKEEPER. When ROSITA has left, the HOUSEKEEPER bursts into silent tears.*)

1ST MANOLA (*Loudly.*) What's going on?

2ND MANOLA Tell us.

HOUSEKEEPER Quiet.

3RD MANOLA (*Quietly.*) Bad news?

The HOUSEKEEPER takes them to the door and looks in the direction that ROSITA went.

HOUSEKEEPER She's telling her now!

Pause, during which everyone listens.

1ST MANOLA Rosita is crying, let's go in.

HOUSEKEEPER Come with me and I'll tell you. Leave her now! You can go through the side door.

They exit.

The stage is empty. Far in the distance a Czerny étude is being played. Pause. The NEPHEW enters and when he reaches the centre of the room, he stops because ROSITA enters. The two stand facing each other. The NEPHEW takes a few steps forward. He puts his arm around her waist. She leans her head on his shoulder.

ROSITA Why did those eyes that now deceive me
once penetrate my soul?
Why did those hands that now do grieve
me
once crown my head with flowers?
The nightingales will mourn
the passing of my youth
and because your shape and presence
is my life, my guiding light,
you break with this cruel absence
the fragile strings of my lute!

NEPHEW (*He takes her to a vis-à-vis and they sit.*)

Oh cousin, oh my precious love,
my nightingale 'mid the snow,
you must keep your mouth sealed
against the imaginary cold!;
my leaving is not an icy deed,
for though I must cross the sea,
the water will have to lend me
blossoms of foam that calm and cool
to quench this fire inside me
when it rages through my soul.

ROSITA

One night as I lay dreaming
on my balcony of jasmine,
I saw two cherub angels
fly down to a lovesick rose.
I saw her turn to scarlet
from her natural colour, white;
but because of her fragility
her petals, burning, fell,
each one fatally wounded
by the ardent kiss of love.
So I, my cousin, innocent,
in my dark myrtle grove,
gave my longing to the breeze
and my white body to the fountain.
'Til like a tender young gazelle,
I raised my eyes and saw you
and felt my heart was pierced
by a thousand trembling needles,
which now are tearing wounds in me
as red as gillyflowers.

NEPHEW

I will return, sweet cousin,
to take you by my side
on a ship of shining gold,
with full blown sails of joy;
in light and dark, night and day,
I'll think only of my love for you.

ROSITA

But the poison that love pours
on a soul that's been abandoned,

will weave from earth and sea
a shroud for my own death.

NEPHEW

When my gentle horse is grazing
on grass that's wet with dew,
when the mist on the river
whitens the wall of the wind,
when the violence of summer
turns the plain a crimson hue,
and the frost covers me
in piercing cold white stars,
I tell you, because I love you,
that I will die for you.

ROSITA

I long to see you arrive
one evening in Granada
with all the warm light salty
with nostalgia for the sea;
a lemon grove of yellow,
and a bloodless jasmine tree,
all tangled round the stones,
will slow your path to me,
and twists of spikenard⁸
will drive my roof mad.
Will you come back?

NEPHEW

I will!

ROSITA

What illuminated dove
will signal your arrival?

NEPHEW

The dove of my faith.

ROSITA

Know that I will embroider
bedsheets for us both.

NEPHEW

By Christ's diamond tears
and the red carnation at his side
I swear I will come back to you.

ROSITA

Farewell, Cousin!

NEPHEW

Cousin, farewell!

*They embrace each other on the vis-à-vis. In
the distance a piano can be heard. The cousin*

leaves. ROSITA is left, weeping. The UNCLE appears, and crosses the stage towards the greenhouse. On seeing him, ROSITA picks up the rose book which lies within her reach.

UNCLE What were you doing?

ROSITA Nothing.

UNCLE Were you reading?

ROSITA Yes.

The UNCLE exits. ROSITA reads.

ROSITA When she opens in the morning,
 blood red is her hue.
 The dew dare not touch her
 for fear of being burned.
 Wide open at midday
 she is as hard as coral.
 The sun spies through the glass
 to see her luminous glow.
 When high in the branches
 the birds begin to sing
 and the evening swoons
 into the violets of the sea,
 she whitens to a whiteness
 as of salt upon a cheek.
 And when the night calls
 on the moon's soft metal horn
 and the stars appear
 as the breezes fade away
 on the very edge of darkness
 her petals begin to fall.

CURTAIN

Act Two (1900)

Drawing room in DOÑA ROSITA's house. In the background is the garden.

SEÑOR X So I will always be a man of this century.

UNCLE The century that has just begun will be one of materialism.

SEÑOR X But much more advanced than the last. My friend, Sr Longoria from Madrid, has just bought an automobile in which he hurls himself along at the extraordinary speed of eighteen miles an hour, and the Shah of Persia, who is without doubt a most agreeable fellow, has acquired a Panhard Levasseur⁹ with a twenty-four horsepower engine.

UNCLE And what I want to know is: where are they going in such a hurry? You saw what happened in the Paris-Madrid rally; they had to suspend it because all the competitors were dead before they reached Bordeaux.

SEÑOR X Count Zborowsky,¹⁰ who died in the accident, and Marcel Renault, or Renol, as it can be and often is pronounced, who was also killed in that accident, are martyrs to science, who on the day the religion of positivity¹¹ dawns will be offered up on its altars. I knew Renol quite well. Poor Marcelo!

UNCLE You will never convince me. (*He sits.*)

SEÑOR X (*With one foot placed on the chair and playing with his cane.*) I will do so one hundred per cent! Although a professor of Political Economy cannot really debate with a rose-grower. But in this day and age, believe me, quietisms¹² and obscurantist¹³ ideas are no longer the thing. Those who are

setting the pace today are men such as Juan Bautista Sai,¹⁴ or Sé, as it can be and often is pronounced, or Count León Tolstuá, commonly Tolstoy, as elegant in his form as he is profound in his concept. I consider myself to be part of the living Polis;¹⁵ I am no disciple of the Natura Naturata.¹⁶

UNCLE We all live from day to day as best we can or know how to.

SEÑOR X The earth is a mediocre planet, that goes without saying, but one ought to give civilisation a helping hand. If Santos Dumont, instead of studying comparative Meteorology, had dedicated his life to cultivating roses, the navigable aerostat would still be in the bosom of Brahma.¹⁷

UNCLE (*Offended.*) Botany is also a science.

SEÑOR X (*Disparaging.*) Yes, but an applied one: for the study of the juices of the fragrant Anthemis¹⁸ or the rhubarb, or the giant Pulsatilla, or the narcotic secretions of the Datura Stramonium.

UNCLE (*Innocent.*) Do those plants interest you?

SEÑOR X I lack an adequate volume of experience with them. What interests me is culture, which is different. Voila! (*Pause.*) And... Rosita?

UNCLE Rosita? (*Pause. Calling.*) Rosita!...

VOICE (*Off.*) She's not here.

UNCLE She's not here.

SEÑOR X I am sorry to hear that.

UNCLE So am I. Today is her saint's day, so she'll have gone out to recite her forty prayers.

SEÑOR X Please give her this pendentif on my behalf. It is a mother of pearl Eiffel tower above two

doves who bear in their beaks the wheel of industry.

UNCLE She'll be most grateful.

SEÑOR X I almost brought her a little silver cannon through whose barrel one could see the Virgin of Lurdes, or Lourdes,¹⁹ or a belt-clasp composed of a snake and four dragonflies, but I thought the first was in better taste.

UNCLE Thank you.

SEÑOR X I am charmed by your favourable welcome.

UNCLE Thank you.

SEÑOR X Please convey my humble devotion to your wife.

UNCLE Thank you very much.

SEÑOR X Convey my humble devotion to your enchanting niece, to whom I wish good fortune on this celebration of her saint's day.

UNCLE A thousand thanks.

SEÑOR X Consider me your loyal servant.

UNCLE A million thanks.

SEÑOR X May I say once more...

UNCLE Thank you, thank you, thank you.

SEÑOR X Until we meet again. (*He leaves.*)

UNCLE (*Loudly.*) Thank you, thank you, thank you.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Enters laughing.*) I don't know how you have the patience. Between this gentleman and that other one, Don Confucio Montes de Oca,²⁰ baptised in lodge number forty-three, this house will go up in flames one of these days.

UNCLE I've told you before that I don't like you eavesdropping.

HOUSEKEEPER Now that's what I call ingratitude. I admit I may have been behind the door Sir, but it

wasn't to listen, only to put a broom upside down so that the gentleman would leave.

AUNT Has he gone yet?

UNCLE Yes. (*Exits.*)

HOUSEKEEPER Is that another of Rosita's suitors?

AUNT Why do you talk about suitors? You don't know Rosita!

HOUSEKEEPER But I know the suitors.

AUNT My niece is engaged.

HOUSEKEEPER Don't make me say it, don't make me say it, don't make me say it, don't make me say it!

AUNT Well be quiet then.

HOUSEKEEPER Do you think that it's right that a man should go away for fifteen years and leave a woman waiting? A woman who is the cream of the crop? She should marry. My hands are aching from putting away Marseille lace tablecloths and sets of embroidered bedsheets, tablemats, and gauze bedspreads with embossed flowers. She should be using them and wearing them out, but she doesn't realise how time is passing. She'll have hair like silver and she'll still be sewing satin ribbons onto the lace of her nightdress, ready for her wedding night.

AUNT Why do you get involved with things that don't concern you?

HOUSEKEEPER (*Astonished.*) But I don't get involved, I am involved.

AUNT I am quite sure that she is happy.

HOUSEKEEPER She certainly thinks she is. Yesterday she had me keep her company the whole day at the door of the circus, because she insisted that one of the acrobats looked like her cousin.

AUNT And did he?

HOUSEKEEPER He was as handsome as a young priest singing his first mass, but your nephew could only wish to have that waist, that white neck and that moustache. They were not a bit alike. There are no handsome men in your family.

AUNT Thank you very much!

HOUSEKEEPER They are all short and a bit round-shouldered.

AUNT Well really!

HOUSEKEEPER It's the truth, Señora. The fact was that Rosita liked the look of therobat, as I did and as you would have done. But in her mind she gives her cousin the same good looks. Sometimes I'd like to take a shoe and hit her round the head with it. Because if she's forever staring up at the sky she'll finish up with cows' eyes.

AUNT That's quite enough. Its one thing for a loudmouth to speak, but she shouldn't be allowed to bark.

HOUSEKEEPER You're not going to throw in my face that I don't love her?

AUNT Sometimes it seems that you don't.

HOUSEKEEPER I would give her the bread from my mouth or the blood from my veins if she asked for them.

AUNT (*Forceful.*) Sentimental rubbish! Nothing but words!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Forceful.*) And deeds! I have proved it. And deeds! I love her more than you do.

AUNT That's a lie.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Forceful.*) It's the truth!

AUNT Don't raise your voice at me!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Loud.*) That's why God placed this bell of a tongue in my mouth!

AUNT Shut up, you ill-mannered woman!

HOUSEKEEPER I've spent forty years by your side.

AUNT (*On the verge of tears.*) Consider yourself dismissed!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Very loud.*) Thank God I won't have to lay eyes on you again!

AUNT (*Crying.*) Out into the street, at once!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Bursts into tears.*) Into the street!

She moves, crying, towards the door and as she exits she drops something onto the floor. The two women are crying.

Pause.

AUNT (*Wiping her tears, speaking softly.*) What did you drop?

HOUSEKEEPER (*Crying.*) A thermometer case, in the style of Louis the fifteenth.

AUNT Really?

HOUSEKEEPER Yes, Señora. (*They cry.*)

AUNT Can I see?

HOUSEKEEPER It's for Rosita's saint's day. (*She moves towards her.*)

AUNT (*Sniffing.*) It's beautiful.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Voice breaking with emotion.*) In the middle of the velvet there's a fountain made with real shells; over the fountain a wire arbour with green roses; the water in the basin is blue sequins and the jet of the fountain is the thermometer itself. The pools around it are painted in oils and there's a nightingale drinking that's embroidered in gold thread. I wanted one that would wind up and sing but I couldn't get one.

AUNT You couldn't get one.

- HOUSEKEEPER But it doesn't matter if it doesn't sing. In the garden we have real ones.
- AUNT That's true. *(Pause.)* Why did you go to so much trouble?
- HOUSEKEEPER *(Crying.)* Everything I have I would give to Rosita.
- AUNT You love her more than anyone!
- HOUSEKEEPER Apart from you.
- AUNT No. You've given her your lifeblood.
- HOUSEKEEPER You have sacrificed your life for her.
- AUNT But I have done it out of duty and you out of generosity.
- HOUSEKEEPER *(Stronger.)* Don't say that!
- AUNT You have shown that you love her more than anyone.
- HOUSEKEEPER I have done what anybody would have done in my place. I am a servant. You pay me and I serve.
- AUNT We've always thought of you as one of the family.
- HOUSEKEEPER A humble servant who gives what she has, that's all I am.
- AUNT You are telling me that's all you are?
- HOUSEKEEPER What else am I?
- AUNT *(Irritated.)* How can you say that in this house? I'm leaving so I won't have to listen to you.
- HOUSEKEEPER *(Irritated.)* Me too. *(They exit quickly through different doors. On her way out, the AUNT bumps into the UNCLE.)*
- UNCLE From living so long in each other's pockets, soft lace has turned into thorns for you two.
- AUNT It's just that she always wants the last word.

- UNCLE Don't tell me, I know it all by heart already... And yet you can't live without her. Yesterday, I heard you explaining the details of our bank account to her. You forget your place. It's hardly the most suitable conversation to have with a servant.
- AUNT She is not a servant.
- UNCLE (*Conciliatory.*) Enough, enough, I don't want to argue with you.
- AUNT But isn't it possible to have a conversation with me?
- UNCLE It is, but I prefer to keep silent.
- AUNT Though you harbour your words of resentment.
- UNCLE What is the point of me saying anything now, after all this time? I am capable of making my own bed, washing my own suits with soap and changing the rugs in my room in order to avoid arguments.
- AUNT It is not fair to give yourself the air of a superior man who is being neglected, when everything in this house comes second to your comfort and desires.
- UNCLE (*Gently.*) Quite the contrary, my girl.
- AUNT (*Serious.*) Totally. Instead of making lace, I prune plants. What do you do for me?
- UNCLE Forgive me. There comes a moment when people who have lived together for many years find cause for offence and disquiet in the smallest things, simply to inject life and passion into something that is really quite dead. When we were twenty we did not have these conversations.
- AUNT No, when we were twenty windows were smashed...
- UNCLE And coldness was a toy in our hands.

ROSITA appears. She is dressed in rose pink. The fashion has changed now from mutton leg sleeves to that of 1900. Bell-shaped skirt. She crosses the stage quickly, with a pair of scissors in her hand. She stops in the centre.

- ROSITA Has the postman been?
- UNCLE Has he been?
- AUNT I don't know. (*Calls off.*) Has the postman been? (*Pause.*) No, not yet.
- ROSITA He always comes at this time.
- UNCLE He should have been here a while ago.
- AUNT He often gets diverted.
- ROSITA The other day I found him playing hopscotch with three children with a pile of letters on the ground beside him.
- AUNT He'll be here soon.
- ROSITA Let me know when he comes. (*She exits quickly.*)
- UNCLE Where are you going with those scissors?
- ROSITA I am going to cut some roses.
- UNCLE (*Taken aback.*) What? Who gave you permission?
- AUNT I did. It's her saint's day.
- ROSITA I want to put some in the window box and the vase in the hall.
- UNCLE Every time you cut a rose it's as if you cut off one of my fingers. I know it's not that important. (*Looking at his wife.*) I don't want to argue. I know they don't last long. (*The HOUSEKEEPER enters.*) That's what the 'Waltz of the Roses' says, which is one of the most beautiful compositions of our time, but I can't disguise the grief I feel when I see them in vases. (*He exits.*)

- ROSITA (*To the HOUSEKEEPER.*) Has the postman been?
- HOUSEKEEPER The only use for roses is to decorate rooms.
- ROSITA (*Annoyed.*) I asked you if the postman had been.
- HOUSEKEEPER (*Annoyed.*) Do you think I keep the letters to myself when they arrive?
- AUNT Go on, go and cut some flowers.
- ROSITA In this house there's a drop of bitterness in everything.
- HOUSEKEEPER Oh yes, there's arsenic hidden in every corner. (*She exits.*)
- AUNT Are you happy?
- ROSITA I don't know.
- AUNT What does that mean?
- ROSITA When I don't see people I am happy, but as I have to see them...
- AUNT Naturally! I don't like the life you are leading. Your fiancé does not ask you to shut yourself away. He always tells me in his letters that you should go out.
- ROSITA But outside in the street I see how time moves on and I don't want to lose my dreams. They've built another new house in the square. I don't want to be aware of how time is passing.
- AUNT Of course you don't! I have often advised you to write to your cousin and to marry someone else. You are a lively person. I know there are men young and old who are in love with you.
- ROSITA But, Aunt! My roots go very deep, and they are anchored in my feelings. If I did not see people, I could believe it was only a week since he left. I wait, the same as the first day.

Besides, what is a year, or two years, or five years? (*The doorbell rings.*) The postman.

AUNT I wonder what he'll have sent you?

HOUSEKEEPER (*Entering.*) Those three spinsters are here to see you, the tasteless frights.

AUNT Holy Mary!

ROSITA Invite them in.

HOUSEKEEPER The mother and her three daughters. Dressed in finery and nothing but stale breadcrumbs to put in their mouths. A good hiding on their...that's what I'd give them! (*Exits.*)

The three tasteless SPINSTERS enter with their MOTHER. The daughters wear huge hats with bad feathers, dresses in a very exaggerated style, long gloves with bracelets on top, and fans hanging from long chains. The MOTHER is dressed in faded black wearing a hat, decorated with old purple ribbons.

MOTHER Congratulations (*Kisses ROSITA.*)

ROSITA Thank you. (*She kisses the SPINSTERS.*) Faith! Charity! Clemency!

1ST SPINSTER Congratulations.

2ND SPINSTER Congratulations.

3RD SPINSTER Congratulations.

AUNT (*To the MOTHER.*) And how are your feet?

MOTHER Worse and worse. If it were not for these three, I would not leave the house. (*They sit.*)

AUNT Have you tried rubbing them with lavender oil?

1ST SPINSTER Every night.

2ND SPINSTER And boiled mallow footbaths.

AUNT There's no rheumatism that can withstand that cure.

Pause.

MOTHER And your husband?

AUNT He's well, thank you.

Pause.

MOTHER With his roses.

AUNT With his roses.

3RD SPINSTER Oh, flowers are so beautiful!

2ND SPINSTER We have a San Francisco rosebush in a pot.

ROSITA But a San Francisco rose has no scent.

1ST SPINSTER Very little.

MOTHER What I like best are syringas.

3RD SPINSTER Violets are lovely too.

Pause.

MOTHER Girls, have you brought the card?

3RD SPINSTER Yes. It's a girl dressed in pink, who is also a barometer. The friar with his cape is so common now. The girl's skirts, which are made of very fine paper, rise or fall according to the humidity.

ROSITA *(Reading.)* At daybreak in the fields
The nightingales were singing
And the words of their sweet song
To Rosita's beauty were a hymn.

You shouldn't have gone to so much trouble.

AUNT It's very tasteful.

MOTHER I am not short of taste, it's money that I lack!

1ST SPINSTER Mother!

2ND SPINSTER Mother!

3RD SPINSTER Mother!

MOTHER Girls, I can speak frankly here. No-one can hear us. *(To the AUNT.)* As you well know, since my husband passed away I have had to perform miracles to manage what's left of

our pension. Even now I sometimes think I hear the girl's father saying to me, generous and gentlemanly as he was, 'Enriqueta, spend, spend, I'm earning good money now'. But those times are over! Still, despite everything, we have not lost our position in society. And what suffering I have gone through, in order that these daughters of mine can continue to wear hats! What tears, what sorrows for a ribbon or a bunch of curls! Those feathers and wires have cost me many a sleepless night.

3RD SPINSTER Mother...!

MOTHER It's the truth, my girl. We cannot spend one céntimo more than we have. Frequently I ask them: 'Which do you want more, precious hearts: an egg for breakfast or a bench in the avenue this evening?' And they reply all together: 'benches'.

3RD SPINSTER Mama, don't go on about it. The whole of Granada knows.

MOTHER Of course, but what can anyone say? There we go with a few potatoes and a bunch of grapes, but wearing a Mongolian cape,²¹ or with a painted parasol or poplinette²² blouse with all the trimmings. Because we have no choice. But it is costing me my life! And my eyes fill with tears when I see them competing with girls who are better off.

2ND SPINSTER Don't you go to the Alameda²³ any more, Rosita?

ROSITA No.

3RD SPINSTER We always go there to meet the Ponce de León and Herrasti girls and the daughters of Baroness Santa Matilde of the Papal Blessing. The best of Granadan society.

- MOTHER Of course! They were all at school together
at the Convent of Porta Coeli.
Pause.
- AUNT (*Getting up.*) You'll have something to eat?
(*They all get up.*)
- MOTHER No-one has hands like yours for making
pine-nut pastries.²⁴
- 1ST SPINSTER (*To ROSITA.*) Any news?
- ROSITA His last letter promised me some. Let's see
what's in this one.
- 3RD SPINSTER Have you finished making the set with
Valencian lace?
- ROSITA Finished it? I've already made another in
nainsook with moiré butterflies.
- 2ND SPINSTER The day you get married you'll have the best
trousseau in the world.
- ROSITA Oh, I still don't think it's enough! They say
that a man tires of seeing you in the same
dress all the time.
- HOUSEKEEPER (*Enters.*) The Ayola girls are here, the
photographer's daughters.²⁵
- AUNT You mean to say the Señoritas Ayola.
- HOUSEKEEPER I announce the arrival of the most gracious
young ladies of the esteemed Ayola,
photographer to his Majesty the King and
winner of the gold medal in the Madrid
exhibition. (*Exits.*)
- AUNT One has to put up with her; but sometimes
she sets my nerves on edge. (*The SPINSTERS
are with ROSITA looking at some pieces of cloth.*)
Servants are impossible nowadays.
- MOTHER Getting above their station. I have a girl
who comes to clean the apartment in the
afternoon; she has always earned the same:
one peseta a month and the leftovers, which

for these days is quite enough, and the other day she suddenly came out with a demand for five pesetas. And I just can't afford it!

AUNT I don't know where it's going to end.

The AYOLA GIRLS enter, and cheerfully greet ROSITA. They are dressed richly in an exaggeratedly fashionable style.

ROSITA Do you know each other?

1ST AYOLA By sight.

ROSITA Señoritas Ayola, Señora and Señoritas Escarpini.

2ND AYOLA We've seen them before sitting on their benches in the avenue. (*They conceal their laughter.*)

ROSITA Please sit down. (*The SPINSTERS sit.*)

AUNT (*To the AYOLA GIRLS.*) Would you like a sweet?

2ND AYOLA No, we've just eaten. In fact, I had four eggs with tomato chutney and I could hardly get up from my chair.

1ST AYOLA How funny! (*They laugh.*)

Pause. The AYOLAS start laughing uncontrollably, ROSITA notices and tries to stop them. The SPINSTERS and their MOTHER are unsmiling. Pause.

AUNT What children!

MOTHER The young!

AUNT It's a happy time.

ROSITA (*Walking around the room as if she were tidying.*) Please, be quiet.

They stop laughing.

AUNT (*To the 3RD SPINSTER.*) And your piano?

3RD SPINSTER I practise very little now. I have a lot of work to do.

ROSITA It's been a long time since I heard you play.

- MOTHER If it wasn't for me her fingers would have seized up altogether. But I am always keeping on at her to practise.
- 2ND SPINSTER Since our poor father died she doesn't feel like it. He so loved to hear her!
- 3RD SPINSTER I remember sometimes tears would roll down his face as he listened.
- 1ST SPINSTER When she played Popper's tarantella.²⁶
- 2ND SPINSTER Or the Virgin's prayer.²⁷
- MOTHER He was so full of feeling!
- The AYOLAS, who have been suppressing their giggles, lose control and burst out laughing. ROSITA, her back turned to the SPINSTERS, laughs as well, but controls herself.*
- AUNT How childish!
- 1ST AYOLA We're laughing because before we came in here...
- 2ND AYOLA She tripped and almost went head over heels...
- 1ST AYOLA And I... (*They laugh.*)
- The SPINSTERS summon a weak laugh, with a nuance of tired sadness.*
- MOTHER We're leaving.
- AUNT You can't.
- ROSITA (*To everyone.*) Well, let's celebrate the fact that you didn't fall over! (*To the HOUSEKEEPER.*) Bring us some of the marzipan Saint Catherine's bones.²⁸
- 3RD SPINSTER Oh, those are delicious!
- MOTHER Last year, we had a gift of half a kilo.
- The HOUSEKEEPER enters with the sweets.*
- HOUSEKEEPER Titbits for people of class. (*To ROSITA.*) The postman is coming along the lane.
- ROSITA Wait for him at the door!

- 1ST AYOLA I don't want anything to eat. I'd prefer a thimbleful of anisette.
- 2ND AYOLA And I'd like some grape juice.
- ROSITA You're always so fond of your tippie!
- 1ST AYOLA When I was six I used to come here and Rosita's fiancé always gave me anisette. Don't you remember Rosita?
- ROSITA (*Serious.*) No!
- 2ND AYOLA Rosita and her fiancé taught me my A, B, C... How long ago was that?
- AUNT Fifteen years!
- 1ST AYOLA I have very nearly forgotten your fiancé's face.
- 2ND AYOLA Didn't he have a scar on his lip?
- ROSITA A scar? Aunt, did he have a scar?
- AUNT Don't you remember, my child? It was the only imperfection on his face.
- ROSITA But it wasn't a scar: it was a burn, a bit pink. Scars run deep.
- 1ST AYOLA I can't wait for Rosita to get married!
- ROSITA For God's sake!
- 2ND AYOLA No, seriously. Me too!
- ROSITA Why?
- 1ST AYOLA Because I want to go to a wedding. I'm going to get married the first chance I get.
- AUNT Child!
- 1ST AYOLA To anyone, I just don't want to be an old maid.
- 2ND AYOLA I agree.
- AUNT (*To the MOTHER.*) What do you make of that?
- 1ST AYOLA I mean, the only reason I'm friends with Rosita is because she has a sweetheart. Women without sweethearts are faded, shrivelled up inside and they all... (*Sees the*

- SPINSTERS.) Well, not all, no; some of them...
Well put it this way, they are consumed with
longing!
- AUNT Ahem! That's enough now.
- MOTHER Leave it.
- 1ST SPINSTER Many women don't marry because they
don't want to.
- 2ND AYOLA I don't believe that.
- 1ST SPINSTER (*Emphatically.*) I know it for a fact.
- 2ND AYOLA A woman who doesn't want to get married
stops powdering her face and putting
padding down her front, and doesn't spend
day and night on her balcony eyeing people
up in the street.
- 2ND SPINSTER She might want some fresh air!
- ROSITA What a ridiculous conversation! (*They force a
laugh.*)
- AUNT Well. Why don't we play some music?
- MOTHER Go on, child!
- 3RD SPINSTER (*Getting up.*) But what shall I play?
- 2ND AYOLA Play *Viva Frascuelo!*²⁹
- 2ND SPINSTER The barcarolle from *The Frigate Numancia*.
- ROSITA What about *What the Flowers Say?*³⁰
- MOTHER Oh yes, *What the Flowers Say!* (*To the AUNT.*)
Have you heard her? She plays and recites at
the same time, it's a delight!
- 3RD SPINSTER I can also recite 'The dark swallows will
return to build nests on your balcony.'
- 1ST AYOLA That's very sad.
- 1ST SPINSTER Sad can be beautiful too.
- AUNT Come on, come on!
- 3RD SPINSTER (*At the piano.*) Mother, take me to the
fields
in the early morning sun

to see the flowers open
as the trees sway in the breeze.
A thousand flowers, a thousand words,
to serve a thousand lovers,
and the fountain tells a tale
that the nightingale kept secret.

ROSITA The rose unfurled her petals
in the early morning sun;
So red with tender blood,
that the dew had to run;
So hot on her long stem,
that the breeze that touched her burned;
How tall! How she shimmered!
She was open wide!

3RD SPINSTER ‘My eyes are for you alone,’
declared the heliotrope.
‘I’ll never love you as long as I live,’
cried the basil flower.
‘I’m shy,’ whispered the violet
‘I’m cold,’ the white rose said.
The jasmine swore: ‘I’ll be true’;
The carnation: ‘I’m passionate’.

2ND SPINSTER The hyacinth means bitterness;
the passion flower, pain.

1ST SPINSTER Wild mustard is disdain,
and irises mean hope.

AUNT The lily says: ‘I am your friend’;
‘I believe in you’ the passion flower.
The honeysuckle soothes you,
the evergreen brings death.

MOTHER The evergreen brings death,
flower of hands crossed in prayer;
You’re well indeed when the air
weeps on your funeral wreath!

ROSITA The rose was open wide,
but the evening was drawing in,
and a sad, snow-scented wind

was blowing through the trees;
 darkness fell, the nightingale sang
 the rose grew pale and weak;
 like a young girl dying,
 overwhelmed by grief.
 And when the night blew
 on the moon's great metal horn
 and the tangled winds fell
 to sleep on the mountain top,
 she shed her petals, sighing,
 for the clear light of the dawn.

3RD SPINSTER The flowers in your long hair
 are weeping now in pain.
 Some have little daggers;
 some have fire, others water.

1ST SPINSTER Flowers lend their tongues
 to girls who are in love.

ROSITA The willow herb means envy;
 The dahlia sharp disdain;
 The lily is for sighs of love;
 The fleur-de-lis is laughter.
 Yellow flowers all mean hate;
 Scarlet is fury incarnate;
 White is for your wedding day
 and blue for a funeral shroud.

3RD SPINSTER Mother, take me to the fields
 in the early morning sun
 to see the flowers open
 as the trees sway in the breeze.

*She plays the final phrase on the piano and
 stops.*

AUNT Oh, how beautiful!

MOTHER They also know the language of the fan, the
 language of gloves, the language of postage
 stamps and the language of the hours.³¹ It
 sends shivers down my spine when they
 recite:

When the twelve strokes of midnight
echo across the world;
Remember the hour of your death
sinner, and pray to the Lord.

1ST AYOLA (*Her mouth filled with sweets.*) What a horrid
rhyme.

MOTHER And when they say:

We were born at one o'clock
La la la
And being born is very like
La la la
Opening your eyes wide to see
La
A paradise of beautiful flowers
Flowers, flowers, flowers.

2ND AYOLA (*To her SISTER.*) I think the old girl's had a few
too many. (*To the MOTHER.*) Would you like
another drink?

MOTHER With the greatest pleasure and finest delight,
as we used to say in my day.

*ROSITA has been waiting for the arrival of the
postman.*

HOUSEKEEPER The postman!
Noisy flurry of activity.

AUNT And he's come just in time.

3RD SPINSTER He's picked the right day for it to arrive.

MOTHER How considerate of him!

2ND AYOLA Open the letter!

1ST AYOLA It'd be more discreet for you to read it alone,
because he'll probably say something risqué.

MOTHER Good Lord!
ROSITA exits with the letter.

1ST AYOLA A letter from a sweetheart is not a
prayerbook.

3RD SPINSTER It's a prayerbook of love.

- 2ND AYOLA Oh, what refinement! (*The AYOLAS laugh.*)
- 1ST AYOLA It's clear that she's never received one.
- MOTHER (*Forceful.*) Fortunately for her!
- 1ST AYOLA Well if that's the way she wants it.
- AUNT (*To the HOUSEKEEPER, who is about to follow ROSITA.*) Where are you going?
- HOUSEKEEPER Can't I take a step without your permission?
- AUNT Leave her be!
- ROSITA (*Enters.*) Aunt! Aunt!
- AUNT My child, what has happened?
- ROSITA (*Upset.*) Oh, Aunt!
- 1ST AYOLA What?
- 3RD SPINSTER Tell us!
- 2ND SPINSTER What is it?
- HOUSEKEEPER Speak!
- AUNT Out with it!
- MOTHER A glass of water!
- 2ND AYOLA Come on!
- 1ST AYOLA Quick.
Noisy flurry of activity.
- ROSITA (*Her voice choked.*) He's going to marry...
(*Everyone is horrified.*) He's going to marry me,
because he can't wait any longer, but...
- 2ND AYOLA (*Hugs her.*) Hooray! What happiness!
- 1ST AYOLA A hug!
- AUNT Let her finish.
- ROSITA (*Calmer.*) But as it's not possible for him to
come now, the wedding will be by proxy and
he will come after.
- 1ST SPINSTER Congratulations!
- MOTHER (*On the verge of tears.*) May God grant you the
happiness you deserve! (*She hugs her.*)
- HOUSEKEEPER Fine, but what does 'by proxy' mean?

ROSITA Nothing. Someone else stands in for the groom at the ceremony.

HOUSEKEEPER And then?

ROSITA Then you are a married woman!

HOUSEKEEPER And on the wedding night?

ROSITA Lord!

1ST AYOLA Good point. What happens on the wedding night?

AUNT Girls!

HOUSEKEEPER Let him come in person and get married. By proxy! I've never heard of such a thing in all my life. The bed and its covers left shivering with cold, the nightdress for the wedding night buried deep in the chest. Señora, don't let the proxy enter this house. *(They all laugh.)* Señora, I say I don't want proxies!

ROSITA But he will come soon. This is further proof of how much he loves me!

HOUSEKEEPER Alright then! Let him come and take your arm and let him stir sugar into your coffee and try it first to make sure it doesn't burn! *(Laughter.)*

The UNCLE appears with a rose.

ROSITA Uncle!

UNCLE I heard everything, and almost without realising it I cut the only mutable rose I had in my greenhouse. It was still red.

Wide open at midday
she is as red as coral.

ROSITA The sun spies through the glass
to see her luminous glow.

UNCLE If I had waited two hours before cutting it, it would have been white.

ROSITA Pure white, as a dove
or the laughter of the waves:

White like the cold white
of salt upon a cheek.

UNCLE But it still has the fire of its youth.

AUNT Take a drink with me, my dear. Today there
is good reason to do so.

*Noisy flurry of activity. The 3RD SPINSTER
sits at the piano and plays a polka. ROSITA
is looking at the rose. The 2ND and 1ST
SPINSTER dance with the AYOLAS and sing.*

I saw you, my lady
on the shore of the sea,
your sweet languid air
made me stand and sigh
and that subtle sweetness
of my fatal illusion
by moonlight you saw it
shipwrecked on the rocks.

*The AUNT and UNCLE dance. ROSITA moves
towards 2ND SPINSTER and one AYOLA,
who are dancing together. She dances with the
spinster. The AYOLAS start to clap her hands
on seeing the older people dancing and the
HOUSEKEEPER enters and joins in.*

CURTAIN

Act Three (1910)

Room with low ceiling and windows with green venetian blinds overlooking the garden. There is a silence on stage. A clock strikes six o'clock in the evening. The HOUSEKEEPER crosses the stage with a large box and a suitcase. Ten years have passed. The AUNT appears and sits in a low chair in the centre of the stage. Silence. The clock strikes six once more. Pause.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Enters.*) Six o'clock for the second time.

AUNT And where's our child?

HOUSEKEEPER Upstairs, in the tower. And where have you been?

AUNT Taking the last of the flowerpots out of the greenhouse.

HOUSEKEEPER I didn't see you all morning.

AUNT Since my husband died this house is so empty it seems twice as large and we have to search to find each other. Some nights in my room when I cough I hear it echo, as if I were in a church.

HOUSEKEEPER It's true this house is too big for us now.

AUNT Oh...if he were still with us, with that clarity of mind that he had, all that talent... (*Almost crying.*)

HOUSEKEEPER (*Singing.*) La la la, la la... No, Señora, I won't have any crying. It's been six years now since he died and I don't want you to be like the first day. We have wept enough for him! Our step must be firm, Señora! Let the sun shine into the darkest corners! He can wait a few more years for us yet, while we go on cutting his roses!

AUNT (*Getting up.*) I'm very old now. The ruin of our home is a heavy burden.

HOUSEKEEPER We'll be alright. I'm old too!

AUNT If only I were your age!

HOUSEKEEPER There's not much difference between us, but with all my work I am well oiled, while from so much sitting in your chair your legs have almost seized up.

AUNT So you think I haven't worked?

HOUSEKEEPER With your fingertips, with needle and thread, pruning plants, making jam; whereas I have worked with my back, my knees, my nails.

AUNT So, running a home is not work?

HOUSEKEEPER Scrubbing your floors is much harder.

AUNT I don't want to argue.

HOUSEKEEPER Why not? It helps us to pass the time. Go on. Answer me back. We've lost our tongues. In the old days there was shouting. What about this, what about that, what about the custard puddings, get on with that ironing...

AUNT There is no fight left in me now...with soup one day, some fried breadcrumbs the next, my little glass of water and my rosary in my pocket, I could wait for death with dignity... But when I think of Rosita!

HOUSEKEEPER That's what cuts deepest!

AUNT (*Impassioned.*) When I think of the wrong that has been done to her, the terrible deception that was kept up and the falseness of that man's heart, who is no longer part of my family and who does not deserve to be part of my family, I wish I was twenty years old so I could take the boat to Tucamán and take a horsewhip...

HOUSEKEEPER (*Interrupts her.*)...and take a sword and cut off his head and smash it with two rocks, and cut

off the hand that made those false oaths and wrote those lying love letters.

AUNT Yes, yes; what has cost blood, he should pay for with blood, even though it were all my blood, and then...

HOUSEKEEPER ...scatter his ashes on the sea.

AUNT Bring him back to life again and back to Rosita, so that I can breathe, satisfied that my family's honour has been restored.

HOUSEKEEPER So you admit now I was right.

AUNT I do.

HOUSEKEEPER Over there he found the rich woman he was looking for and got married, but he should have told us sooner. Because who wants this woman now? She is past it! Señora, couldn't we send him a poisoned letter, that would kill him as soon as he opened it?

AUNT What an idea! He has been married for eight years now and not until last month did the wretch write and tell me the truth. I could sense from his letters there was something; the marriage by proxy that never materialised, a certain hesitancy..., he didn't dare, then finally he told me. He waited until his father died, of course! And meanwhile this poor child...

HOUSEKEEPER Ssh!

AUNT (*Changing the subject.*) And pick up those two jars as well.

ROSITA appears. She is dressed in pale pink in the fashion of 1910. She has her hair in ringlets. She has aged a lot.

HOUSEKEEPER Child!

ROSITA What are you doing?

HOUSEKEEPER Just gossiping. And you, where are you off to?

LORCA

ROSITA I'm going to the greenhouse. Have they taken the flowerpots yet?

AUNT There are a few left.

ROSITA exits. The two women dry their tears.

HOUSEKEEPER So this is it, is it? You sitting there and me sitting here, waiting for death? Is there no justice? Haven't we got the guts to go and beat him to a pulp?

AUNT Be quiet, don't go on!

HOUSEKEEPER I'm not the sort who can suffer these things without my heart racing around inside my breast like a dog on the run. When I buried my husband I felt it sorely, but deep down there was great gladness...no, not gladness, it's just that my heart was pounding because I was not the one in the coffin. When I buried my little girl...do you hear me? When I buried my little girl it was as if someone was trampling on my insides; but the dead are dead. They are dead, we cry, we shut the door and get on with life! But this situation with Rosita is the worst. It's like loving someone and not being able to touch them; crying and not knowing who for; sighing for someone who you know does not deserve your sighs. It's an open wound that never stops bleeding a trickle of blood and there is no-one, no-one in the world who'll bring the cotton wool, the bandages or a precious lump of ice to soothe it.

AUNT What can I do?

HOUSEKEEPER We must let the current take us.

AUNT When you are old the world turns its back on you.

HOUSEKEEPER While I still have arms you will lack nothing.

- AUNT *(Pause. Very quietly, as if ashamed.)* I can no longer pay your wages! You will have to abandon us.
- HOUSEKEEPER Ooh! What a draught is coming through those shutters! Ooh!... Or am I going deaf? And why do I suddenly feel the urge to sing? Like the children coming out of school. *(Children's voices can be heard.)* Can you hear, Señora? My Señora, more my Señora than ever. *(She hugs her.)*
- AUNT Listen to me.
- HOUSEKEEPER I am going to make some food. A casserole of fresh mackerel with fennel.
- AUNT Listen!
- HOUSEKEEPER And a snow mountain! I'll make you a meringue snow mountain covered in coloured sugar strands.
- AUNT But, woman!...
- HOUSEKEEPER *(Loudly.)* Well!... If it isn't Don Martín! Don Martín, come in! Come in! Entertain my Señora for a bit.
- She exits quickly. DON MARTÍN enters. He is an old man with red hair. He has a crutch with which he supports a lame leg. He is a noble type, of great dignity, with a definitive air of sadness.*
- AUNT How nice to see you!
- MARTÍN When is the final uprooting to take place?
- AUNT Today.
- MARTÍN So you really are departing!
- AUNT The new house is not like this one. But it has nice views and a little patio with two fig trees where you can plant flowers.
- MARTÍN That will be better. *(They sit.)*
- AUNT And you?

MARTÍN

My life goes on the same. I have just given one of my classes on rhetoric. Hell on earth. It was a beautiful lecture: 'The concept and definition of Harmony', but the boys were not in the slightest bit interested. And what boys! They can see I am disabled, so they show me a bit of respect – the odd pin on the seat of my chair or a paper doll stuck to my back – but to my colleagues they do quite horrible things. They are the sons of the rich and because their parents pay one is not allowed to punish them. That is what the principal is always telling us. Yesterday, they insisted that poor Señor Canito, the new Geography master, was wearing a corset, because his body is rather rigid; and when he was alone in the courtyard, the big boys and the boarders got together, stripped him from the waist up, tied him to one of the pillars in the corridor and tossed a pitcher of water over him from the balcony.

AUNT

Poor thing!

MARTÍN

Every day I go into school trembling with fear for what they might do to me, although, as I said, they have some respect for my misfortune. A little while ago there was a huge scandal, because Señor Consuegra, who teaches Latin admirably, found cat excrement on top of his class register.

AUNT

They are the very devil!

MARTÍN

They are paying and so we have to tolerate them. And believe me, their parents will laugh later at their disgraceful pranks, because as we are only assistant teachers and won't be the ones who examine their children, they regard us as men without feelings, on the lowest rung of the ladder of those who still wear a necktie and stiff collar.

AUNT Oh, Don Martín! What a world we live in!

DON MARTÍN What a world! I always dreamed of being a poet. I was blessed with a natural gift and I wrote a play; that was not possible to perform.

AUNT *Jephtha's Daughter?*

MARTÍN That's it!

AUNT Rosita and I have both read it. You lent it to us. We've read it four or five times!

MARTÍN (*Anxious.*) And what...?

AUNT I liked it enormously. I have always said so. Especially that moment when she is going to die and she remembers her mother and calls out to her.

MARTÍN Powerful, isn't it? A true drama. In form and concept. Not possible to perform. (*He breaks into recitation.*)

Oh mother unparalleled! Turn your gaze
on she who in base trance defeated lies;
receive unto yourself these glittering
jewels
and the horrid, hollow groan, of my
demise!

It's not bad is it? And don't the emphasis and
the caesura sound good in the line 'and the
horrid, hollow groan, of my demise'?

AUNT Exquisite! Exquisite!

MARTÍN And when Glucinius is going to challenge
Isaias and he lifts up the hanging in his
tent...

HOUSEKEEPER (*Interrupting him.*) Through here.

Two WORKMEN enter, dressed in corduroy.

WORKMAN 1 Good afternoon.

MARTÍN & AUNT (*Together.*) Good afternoon.

HOUSEKEEPER That's the one! (*She points to a large divan at the back of the room.*)

The workmen pick it up and take it out slowly, as if they were carrying a coffin. The HOUSEKEEPER follows them. Silence. Two rings of church bells are heard while the men are carrying out the divan.

MARTÍN Is it the Novena³² of Santa Gertrudis la Magna?

AUNT Yes, at San Anton's.

MARTÍN It is very difficult to be a poet. (*The WORKMEN leave.*) Later I wanted to be a pharmacist. That's a quiet life.

AUNT My brother, may he rest in peace, was a pharmacist.

MARTÍN But I wasn't able to. I had to help my mother and I became a schoolmaster. That's why I so envied your husband. He did what he wanted to do.

AUNT And it ruined him!

MARTÍN True, but my situation is worse.

AUNT But you are still writing.

MARTÍN I don't know why I write, because I have no great hopes, and yet it is the only thing I enjoy. Did you read my story yesterday in the second edition of *The Granadan Mind*?

AUNT 'Mathilda's Birthday'? Yes, we read it; it was delightful.

MARTÍN Do you really think so? I tried to reinvent myself with that one, writing about something in a contemporary setting; I even mention an aeroplane! The truth is that one must move with the times. Still, what I like most of course are my sonnets.

AUNT To the nine muses of Parnassus!

MARTÍN To the ten, to the ten. Don't you remember I named Rosita my tenth muse?

HOUSEKEEPER (*Enters.*) Señora, will you help me fold this sheet. (*They start to fold the sheet together.*) Don Martín with your little red head! Why did you never get married, you good Christian man? You wouldn't be so lonely now!

MARTÍN No-one wanted me!

HOUSEKEEPER Because there's no taste any more. With that beautiful way of speaking you have!

AUNT Careful you don't make him fall in love with you!

MARTÍN Let her try!

HOUSEKEEPER When he's teaching on the ground floor of the school, I go to the coal yard to listen. 'What is an idea?' 'The intellectual representation of a thing or an object.' Isn't that it?

MARTÍN Listen to her! Listen to her!

HOUSEKEEPER Yesterday you were shouting out: 'No, that is a hyperbaton'³³ and then 'the epinicion'³⁴... I'd like to understand, but as I don't, it just makes me laugh, and the coal seller, who's always reading a book called *The Ruins of Palmira*, shoots me looks as fierce as two rabid tomcats. But even though I laugh, ignorant as I am, I can see that Don Martín is a gifted man.

MARTÍN Today no value is given to the study of Rhetoric or Poetics, or to a university education.

The HOUSEKEEPER exits quickly with the folded sheet.

AUNT What can we do! We don't have much time left on this stage.

MARTÍN And we must use it in acts of kindness and sacrifice.

Voices are heard.

AUNT What is going on?

HOUSEKEEPER (*Appears.*) Don Martín, you must go to the school, the children have stuck a nail through the water pipes and all the classrooms are flooded.

MARTÍN I'm on my way. I dreamt of Parnassus, and I have to do the work of a builder or plumber. As long as they don't push me and I slip... (*The HOUSEKEEPER helps DON MARTÍN to stand up.*)

Voices are heard.

HOUSEKEEPER He's coming...! Keep calm! Let's hope the water rises until there's not one child left alive!

MARTÍN (*Exits.*) God's will be done!

AUNT Poor thing, what a fate!

HOUSEKEEPER Imagine it. He irons his own collars and darns his own socks, and when he was ill and I took him some custard, the sheets on his bed were as black as coal and the walls and the washbasin...oh.

AUNT While others have so much!

HOUSEKEEPER That's why I will always say: damn the rich, damn them. Let nothing be left of them, not even their fingernails!

AUNT Forget them!

HOUSEKEEPER I am quite sure they'll all be going head first down to hell. Where do you think Don Rafael Salé will be now, that exploiter of the poor they buried the day before yesterday, God forgive him, with all those priests and nuns and all that mumbo jumbo? He'll be in hell! And he'll be saying 'I've got twenty

million pesetas, don't pinch me with your tongs! I'll give you forty thousand duros³⁵ if you take those hot coals off my feet!'; but the devils with their red hot poker will be poking him here, poking him there, giving him a good kicking and punching him in the face, 'til his blood turns to cinders.

AUNT All Christians know that no rich man will enter the kingdom of heaven, but be careful you don't end up going there head first yourself, talking in that way.

HOUSEKEEPER Me, to hell? The first shove I'd give Old Nick's cauldron would send hot water to the ends of the earth. No, Señora, no. I will force my way into heaven. (*Sweetly.*) With you by my side. Each of us on an armchair of heavenly blue silk which rocks of its own accord, each with a scarlet satin fan. And between us, on a swing made of jasmine and rosemary, Rosita swinging herself gently, and behind, your husband covered in roses, as he was when they carried him out of this room in his coffin; with that same smile, that same white brow as clear as glass, and you rocking, and me rocking and Rosita swinging, and behind us the Good Lord throwing roses at us, as if the three of us were on a mother-of-pearl float covered in candles and flounces in the Holy Week procession.

AUNT And let the handkerchiefs for drying our tears be left here below.

HOUSEKEEPER That's right, forget them. For us, a heavenly knees-up!

AUNT Because we have no tears left in our hearts to shed!

WORKMAN 1 What's next?

HOUSEKEEPER Come with me. (*They exit. From the door.*)
Don't lose heart!

AUNT God bless you! (*She sits slowly.*)

ROSITA appears with a bundle of letters in her hand. Silence.

Have they taken the chest of drawers?

ROSITA They are doing it now. Your cousin
Esperanza sent a child to get a screwdriver.

AUNT They will be putting the beds together for
tonight. We should have gone earlier to
arrange everything to our liking. My cousin
will have put the furniture any old how.

ROSITA But I would rather leave when it's dark
outside. I would put out the street lamp if I
could. The neighbours will be sure to spy on
us anyway. With the removal going on, the
door has been surrounded with children the
whole day, as if there were a dead person in
this house.

AUNT If I had known about it, I would never have
consented to your uncle mortgaging the
house with the furniture and everything. All
that's left for us are the bare necessities, a
chair to sit on and a bed to sleep in.

ROSITA To die in.

AUNT What a trick he's played on us! The new
owners arrive tomorrow! I wish your uncle
could see us now. The old fool! No stomach
for business. Crazy about his roses! No clue
about money! Every day he led me further
into financial ruin. 'So and so is here' and
he would say: 'Show him in'; and the fellow
would come in with empty pockets and
leave with them bulging with silver, and
always 'Don't let my wife see'. Weak-willed
spendthrift! There was no disaster he would

not try to remedy...no homeless child he would not have taken in, because he had a heart bigger than any man has ever had...the purest Christian soul...; no, no, shut up old woman! Shut up, you chatterer, and respect God's will! We are ruined! That is how it is, and I must bear it in silence; but when I look at you...

ROSITA Don't worry about me, Aunt. I know that he took out the mortgage to pay for my furniture and my trousseau. That is what really grieves me.

AUNT He did the right thing. You deserved it all. And everything that was bought is worthy of you and will look beautiful on the day that you use it.

ROSITA The day I use it?

AUNT Of course! The day of your wedding.

ROSITA Don't make me speak about it.

AUNT That is the weakness of decent women in these parts. Not speaking! We don't speak and we should speak (*Calling off.*) Has the postman been?

ROSITA What are you going to do?

AUNT Let you watch me live my life out, so that you can learn from my example.

ROSITA (*Embraces her.*) Hush.

AUNT There are times when I have to speak out. Step outside your four walls my child. Don't give in to your misfortune.

ROSITA (*Kneeling in front of her AUNT.*) For many years now I have grown accustomed to living outside myself, thinking about things that were very far away, and now that those things no longer exist I find myself in a cold place, going round and round in circles

searching for a way out that I will never find. I knew the truth. I knew that he had got married; some kind soul took it upon themselves to tell me that; but I went on receiving his letters with a false hope in my heart, full of sighs, which surprised even me. If people had not spoken about it; if you had not known; if only I had known, I could have fed my hope with his letters and his lies and kept it as strong as in the first year of his absence. But everyone knew and I found myself pointed at by fingers who ridiculed the modesty of a girl still betrothed, and made my maiden's fan seem grotesque. Every year that passed was like an intimate piece of clothing being ripped from my body. Today one friend gets married, then another, and another; and tomorrow she has a son and he grows up and comes to show me his examination results, and new houses are built and new songs are learnt, and I stay the same, still trembling with anticipation; just the same as before, cutting the same carnations, watching the same clouds in the sky; and one day I go out walking in the evening and I realise I don't know anyone; young people leave me behind because I get tired and one of them says, 'There's the old maid'; and another, a good-looking boy with curly hair, says: 'No one will look twice at her now.' And I hear him and I want to cry out but I can't, instead I keep walking with my mouth full of bitter poison and an overwhelming desire to flee, to kick off my shoes, to rest and never again move from my safe corner.

AUNT

Rosita! My child!

ROSITA I am old now. Yesterday I heard the housekeeper say that I could still get married. It's out of the question. Don't think about it. I lost all hope of marrying when I lost the man I loved with my whole being, the man I loved...the man I love. It is all finished...and yet, now that all my illusions are gone, I go to bed and wake up with the most terrible feeling, the feeling that my hope has died. I want to run away, I want to stop seeing, I want to be peaceful, empty... doesn't a woman have the right to breathe freely? And despite everything hope pursues me, it surrounds me, bites me; like a dying wolf sinking its teeth in for the last time.

AUNT Why didn't you listen to me? Why didn't you marry someone else?

ROSITA My hands were tied. And besides, what man ever came to this house with a sincere and passionate desire to win my affection? Not one.

AUNT You paid them no attention. You were blinded by the thief who flew off with your heart.

ROSITA I have always been a person of integrity.

AUNT You have clung to your idea without seeing reality and without any concern for your future.

ROSITA I am as I am. I cannot change that. All I have left now is my dignity. What is inside me I keep to myself.

AUNT That's exactly what I don't want you to do.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Appears suddenly.*) Neither do I! You should speak, let it all out, we'll have a good cry the three of us and share our feelings.

ROSITA But what can I say? There are things that cannot be said because there are no words to express them; and even if there were, no-one would understand their meaning. You can understand me if I ask for bread or water or even for a kiss, but you will never be able to understand or remove the shadowy hand that freezes or burns my heart – I don't know which – whenever I am alone.

HOUSEKEEPER Now you are saying something.

AUNT There's a consolation for everything.

ROSITA It will be a story without end. I know that my eyes will always be young, and I know that my back will be more bent each day. After all, what has happened to me has happened to a thousand other women. (*Pause.*) But why am I saying all this? (*To the HOUSEKEEPER.*) Go and get our things together, in a few minutes we will be leaving this house; and you, Aunt, don't worry about me. (*Pause. To the HOUSEKEEPER.*) Go on! I don't like it when you look at me like that. I can't stand those looks like a faithful dog's. (*The HOUSEKEEPER leaves.*) Those pitying looks that upset and anger me.

AUNT My child, what do you want me to do?

ROSITA Leave me as a lost thing. (*Pause. She walks around.*) I know that you are thinking of your sister the old maid...an old maid like me. She was bitter and hated children and resented any woman in a new dress..., but I won't be like her. (*Pause.*) Forgive me.

AUNT Don't be silly!
At the back of the room an eighteen-year-old YOUTH appears.

ROSITA Come in.

YOUTH Are you moving out?

ROSITA In a few minutes. When night falls.

AUNT Who is it?

ROSITA It's María's son.

AUNT Which María?

ROSITA The eldest of the three Manolas.

AUNT Ah!

The girls who go to the Alhambra
in threes and fours, alone.

Forgive my poor memory, young man.

YOUTH You've only met me a few times.

AUNT Of course, but I was very fond of your mother. She was a charming woman! She died around the same time as my husband.

ROSITA Before.

YOUTH Eight years ago.

ROSITA He has her face.

YOUTH (*Cheerful.*) Not quite as fine. Mine's been knocked together with a hammer.

AUNT And the same quick wit, the same character!

YOUTH But it's true I do look like her. For carnival I put on one of my mother's dresses...a green dress she used to wear a long time ago...

ROSITA (*Melancholy.*) With black bows...and flounces of Nile-green silk.

YOUTH Yes.

ROSITA And a great bow of velvet at the waist.

YOUTH That's the one.

ROSITA Falling down on either side of the bustle.

YOUTH Exactly! What a ridiculous fashion!

ROSITA (*Sad.*) It was a beautiful fashion!

YOUTH You must be joking! Well there I was coming downstairs with the ancient gown on, killing

myself laughing, filling the hallway with the smell of mothballs, and suddenly my aunt started to sob bitterly because she said it was exactly like looking at my mother. It had quite an effect on me naturally and I left the dress and the veil on my bed.

ROSITA There is nothing more alive than a memory. In the end they make our lives impossible. That's why I understand those old ladies who drink in the street, wanting to obliterate the world, and sit and sing on the benches in the avenue.

AUNT And your married aunt?

YOUTH She writes from Barcelona. Less and less.

ROSITA Does she have children?

YOUTH Four.

Pause.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Enters.*) Let me have the keys to the wardrobe. (*The AUNT gives them to her. Referring to the YOUTH.*) Yesterday I saw this one with his sweetheart in the square. She wanted to go off one way and he wouldn't let her. (*She laughs.*)

AUNT Leave the boy alone!

YOUTH (*Embarrassed.*) We were only fooling around.

HOUSEKEEPER Don't blush! (*Leaving.*)

ROSITA Come on, that's enough!

YOUTH What a beautiful garden you have!

ROSITA Used to have!

AUNT Come and cut some flowers.

YOUTH I wish you well, Doña Rosita.

ROSITA God go with you, my boy! (*They exit. Dusk is falling.*)

Doña Rosita, Doña Rosita!

When she opens in the morning

blood red is her hue.
 In the evening she turns white,
 the white of foam and salt.
 And when night comes
 her petals begin to fall.

Pause.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Enters with a shawl.*) Time to go!

ROSITA Yes, I'll go and put on a coat.

HOUSEKEEPER I've taken the hook from the wall, so you'll find it hanging on the handle of the window.

The 3RD SPINSTER enters, wearing a dark dress, with a veil of mourning on her head and a black ribbon round her neck, as worn in 1912. They speak quietly.

3RD SPINSTER Woman!

HOUSEKEEPER You have caught us just in time.

3RD SPINSTER I am on my way to give a piano lesson near here and I came to see if you needed anything.

HOUSEKEEPER God bless you!

3RD SPINSTER How awful!

HOUSEKEEPER Yes, yes, but don't upset me, don't rip the bandage off the wound, because I'm the one who must keep everyone's spirits up at this funeral-without-a-body that you're looking at here.

3RD SPINSTER I wanted to say hello to them.

HOUSEKEEPER It's best you don't see them. Come round to the other house!

3RD SPINSTER Yes, that would be best. But if you need anything, you know that I'm here to help in any way I can.

HOUSEKEEPER It's a bad time but it will pass!

A wind can be heard.

3RD SPINSTER There's a wind rising.

HOUSEKEEPER Yes. It looks as if it will rain.

The 3RD SPINSTER leaves.

AUNT (*Enters.*) If the wind carries on like this, there won't be one rose left alive. The cypresses in the arbour are almost touching the walls of my room. It's as if someone were trying to make the garden ugly so that we are not sad to leave it.

HOUSEKEEPER It's never been a really pretty garden. Have you got your coat on? And this scarf. There, all wrapped up. (*She wraps the scarf around her.*) Now, when we arrive, I'll soon have some supper ready. For pudding, a custard tart. You like that. A golden custard tart the colour of marigolds. (*The HOUSEKEEPER speaks with a voice that is choked with deep emotion.*)

The sound of banging is heard.

AUNT It's the door of the greenhouse. Why haven't you closed it?

HOUSEKEEPER It won't close because of the damp.

AUNT It will be banging all night.

HOUSEKEEPER But we won't hear it...

The stage is lit with a soft half-light of dusk.

AUNT I will. I will hear it.

ROSITA appears. She is pale, dressed in white, with a long coat down to the hem of her dress.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Brave.*) Let's go!

ROSITA (*Her voice weak.*) It has started to rain. That means there won't be anyone on their balconies to see us leave.

AUNT It's better like that.

ROSITA hesitates slightly, leans on a chair, and falls, held by the HOUSEKEEPER and AUNT, who stop her from collapsing completely.

ROSITA

And when night comes
her petals begin to fall.

*They exit and when they have left, the stage
is empty. The banging of a door can be heard.
Suddenly a French window at the back of the
stage flies open and white curtains wave in the
wind.*

CURTAIN

Notes on the Translation

1 ENDNOTES

ACT I

- 1 **San Luis (p 88):** a church in the Albaicín area of Granada.
- 2 **The wheel of San Barlolomé (p 91):** San Bartolomé was one of the 12 Apostles, who was flayed alive.
- 3 **San José (p 91):** patron saint of working people and virgins.
- 4 **The Manolas (p 92):** working class women who wore mantillas and fancy popular clothes, and who enjoyed to promenade and be seen.
- 5 **Tucumán (p 94):** a province of North West Argentina.
- 6 **San Nicolas (p 95):** patron saint of children and sailors.
- 7 **The Genil and the Dauro (p 97):** two rivers which run through Granada.
- 8 **Spikenard (p 101):** an aromatic herb.

ACT II

- 9 **Panhard Levasseur (p 103):** a very fast revolutionary two-cylinder engine car, designed by a Frenchman called Levasseur in 1890.
- 10 **Count Zborowsky (p 103):** (1894-1924) the wealthy son of a Polish count and an American mother. He designed four cars, including three named Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, immortalized in the famous film. He died in a crash in the Italian Grand Prix.
- 11 **Religion of Positivity (p 103):** humanist religion constructed by Auguste Comte, based solely on experience and opposed to theology and metaphysics.
- 12 **Quietism (p 103):** a late 17th Century religious movement of passive mysticism and the contemplation of the perfection of God.
- 13 **Obscurantism (p 103):** a movement opposed to progress through knowledge, and to new ideas and methods. Reactionary.

- 14 **Juan Bautista Sai (p 104):** (1767-1832) an economist who invented the law of the market, ie the law of supply and demand.
- 15 **The Polis (p 104):** the state in Ancient Greece. Here it refers to the liberalism of the times.
- 16 **Natura Naturata (p 104):** all natural things attributed to nature itself without the need of an outside creator.
- 17 **Santos Dumont (p 104):** (1873-1932) an important early pioneer of aviation who built and flew the first dirigible balloon. The navigable aerostat is a flying machine lighter than air, such as a hot air balloon.
Brahma: the supreme God of Hindu mythology, of whom the whole world is no more than a manifestation. Hence something which is simply an unrealised possibility could be said to be still in the bosom of Brahma.
- 18 **The Anthemis (p 104):** a plant with a daisy-like flower.
The Pulsatilla: a particularly beautiful alpine flower, sometimes known as the Pasque flower.
The Datura Stramonium: an oblong trumpet-shaped fragrant flower, sometimes 6-10 cm long.
- 19 **Lourdes (p 105):** A town in southwest France with a shrine to Saint Bernadette, with a reputation for miraculous cures.
- 20 **Don Confucio Montes de Oca (p 105):** this name combines the surname of a Spanish military conspirator, with a secular first name, thereby caricaturing Granadan bourgeois 'advanced' culture.
- 21 **Mongolian cape (p 115):** a cape made from mongolian lamb's wool or fur.
- 22 **Poplinette (p 115):** a ribbed fabric made of silk and wool.
- 23 **The Alameda (p 115):** Tree-lined Granadan avenue where it was customary to stroll in the evening or sit and watch others strolling.
- 24 **Pine-nut pastries (p 116):** a popular Granadan delicacy.
- 25 **Ayola (p 116):** an esteemed photographer of the time. The implication is that the Ayola girls (the photographer's

- daughters) are of a rising social class.
- 26 **David Popper (p 118):** (1843-1913) a popular composer of cello music.
 - 27 **'The Virgin's Prayer' (p 118):** a tasteless but best-selling composition by a Polish composer.
 - 28 **St Catherine's bones (p 118):** long marzipan sweets, filled with chocolate, which were usually made by nuns.
 - 29 **'Viva Frascuelo' 'The Frigate Numancia' (p 120):** both patriotic songs. The Frigate Numancia was a celebrated Spanish armoured frigate that had proved invincible in war. Launched in 1863, it was used in Spain's wars with Peru and Chile in 1866 and was the first ironclad ship to circumnavigate the globe.
 - 30 **What the Flowers Say (p 120):** a list of 31 flowers and their meanings were in Lorca's possession at the time of writing the play.
 - 31 **Language of the fan...gloves...postage stamps...hours (p 122):** According to Lorca's brother, references to these were found by Lorca in books and magazines at the time of writing the play.

ACT III

- 32 **Novena (p 134):** this was a nine day prayer, sometimes for penance on behalf of a sick person or for another specific purpose.
- 33 **A hyperbaton (p 135):** an inversion of the natural order of words.
- 34 **Epinicion (p 135):** a victory ode.
- 35 **Forty thousand duros (p 137):** one duro is worth five Spanish pesetas.

2 NOTE ON THE MUSIC

The poet's brother states that the poem 'Granada Elvira Street' was originally a Granadan folksong, a 'Fandanguillo'. However, Mr Anton Garcia Abril composed the music for the original production of the play and owns the scores of these. For the Orange Tree production, the music for 'What the Flowers Say' and the dance in the same act were composed by John Dalby.

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

Two Plays

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Trader Faulkner trained as an actor, acrobat and flamenco dancer. He wrote, directed and starred in *Lorca: an Evocation* which toured internationally. With John Goodwin he wrote and played the one-man show *Losing My Marbles* (also published by Oberon). Trader was awarded the Spanish Order of Merit by King Juan Carlos.

Rebecca Morahan studied Spanish at New Hall, Cambridge University. **Auriol Smith** studied at the University of Bristol and worked in the University Drama Department with her husband Sam Walters, of the Orange Tree Theatre.



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